

Consultation proposal by Fife Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to establish a new Rosslyn School for pupils with additional support needs, integrated within the new Viewforth High School on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields. On completion of the proposed new school, the existing Rosslyn School would close. Additionally, the proposal includes the integration of a new local library and Fife Council local office within the new Viewforth High School.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. As the council is proposing to close a school, it will need 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 the opportunity for representations to be made to Ministers.

1. Introduction

Fife Council proposes to establish a new Rosslyn School for children and young people with additional support needs, integrated within the new Viewforth High School on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields. On completion of the proposed new school, the existing Rosslyn School would close. Additionally, the proposal includes the integration of a new local library and Fife Council local office within the new Viewforth High School.

1.1 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- 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;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the site of Rosslyn School, Viewforth High School, Gallatown Nursery, Dysart Primary School, Kirkcaldy North Primary School, Pathhead Primary School, and Sinclairtown Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.3 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Fife Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 The council consulted with a wide range of stakeholders on its proposal. Stakeholders were invited to attend a public meeting on 15 January 2014. Additionally, over a three day period, parents of children and young people who attend Roslyn School were invited to attend individual meetings with a council officer and the headteacher where the proposals were explained and council staff could listen to any concerns which they might wish to raise. Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were generally satisfied with the consultation process. Other stakeholders including S1-S6 pupils from Viewforth High School and P3-P7 pupils of primary schools in the Viewforth High School catchment area and parent representatives of the schools affected were also consulted, as were the chairpersons of their Parent Councils.

2.3 All stakeholders agreed with the council's proposal to close the existing Rosslyn School and replace this with a purpose-built new school. They accepted that the new school would provide modern, fit for purpose accommodation to meet the needs of the children and young people who attend Rosslyn School, addressing more appropriately their complex additional needs.

2.4 Rosslyn staff and parents were very positive about the benefits for children and young people to learn in a modern, attractive and fit for purpose building. They recognised, and were pleased about, the greater opportunities for inclusion which a shared building would offer. Staff believed that their professional learning could be enhanced through improved joint working and collegiate activities.

2.5 Rosslyn staff were confident that the new facilities would result in the health needs of children and young people being better met. Improved toilet facilities will ensure that young people are treated with greater dignity and respect.

2.6 Many Rosslyn parents and staff were disappointed that the new Rosslyn School was not a separate building on the campus of the High School or on a ground floor wing attached to the school with no classrooms above.

2.7 Rosslyn staff and parents expressed concerns over particular issues which may emerge in a shared building with regard to noise and light. Most, for example, cited how the noise from bells could impact on the young people with complex additional needs.

2.8 Across the cluster, with the proposal to include a local library and local council office within Viewforth High School, parents' overriding concern was for the safety and security of all children and in particular vulnerable children. They expressed a desire for separate entrances for the pupils at Rosslyn School, young people of Viewforth High School and any other functions housed within the school.

2.9 Across the cluster parents want to be reassured that the integration and inclusion of children and young people is well-planned and well-managed. They felt they had a lack of knowledge of the purpose of the local office. They remain to be convinced that the office sited within the school will bring benefits to the local community.

2.10 A number of children and young people raised the issue of safety and security within and around the school. A few mentioned increased traffic and parking requirements and the need for the consideration of pupils' safety due to increased volume of traffic and the different pattern of traffic which might result from the multiple use of Viewforth High School.

2.11 Most children and young people were in favour of the public library being included within Viewforth High School and could see potential benefits to school and community users in learning together in an attractive environment. Some children raised the issue of existing library users and whether they would be less inclined to use the library in the future if this was within a high school. Other children thought this provided an opportunity to build greater understanding between users of different ages and generations.

2.12 Almost all children and young people were not aware of the purpose and functions of a local council office and were therefore not able to give an informed viewpoint.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The proposal by Fife Council to establish a new Rosslyn School for children and young people with additional support needs, integrated within the new Viewforth High School would offer significant educational benefits for the children and young people attending the new school.

3.2 The learning environment for children and young people would be greatly enhanced by the council's proposal. There are a number of weaknesses in the existing Rosslyn School building. The Victorian building lacks space within a number of the classrooms. The storage space is limited and equipment to aid the movement of children and young people has been added over time rather than built-in. The new school will provide the opportunity to enhance the information and communications technology facilities for the benefit of pupils and staff. A purpose-built sensory room and a quiet room will be planned as replacements for the existing provision. Improved areas for meeting the health needs of young people will also be planned. The new school will offer greater flexibility in delivering and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. It will be necessary to plan carefully to take account of the complex needs of children and young people with regard to noise and light. Rosslyn stakeholders were also keen to ensure that a new sensory garden is planned within the grounds of Viewforth High School.

3.3 Young people from Rosslyn School will have improved chances to access aspects of the curriculum on offer at Viewforth High School, as appropriate. The young people from both Viewforth High School and Rosslyn School will be able to meet socially as well as sharing education experiences. The ability to learn in an educationally inclusive environment will have a positive impact on the personal and social development of young people in the community. Very few stakeholders were persuaded that there were benefits in locating a Fife Council local office within the new Viewforth High School. They had concerns over the safety and security of the children and young people with regard to other users having access to the building and the school campus. Almost all children were not aware of what services a council office provided. Parents of children from all schools felt very strongly that separate entrances would be necessary with consideration given to how traffic would be managed within the school grounds. The views of stakeholders regarding the inclusion of the public library was mixed. Most could see that this could bring benefits to the school and community. However, stakeholders from Sinclairtown Primary School were concerned that they would have to travel further to access this service. The majority of stakeholders were keen that careful consideration be given to how the public would access the library whilst still keeping the rest of the school secure.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that the proposal to establish a new Rosslyn School for children and young people with additional support needs, integrated within the new Viewforth High School on the site of the Windmill Road playing fields has the potential to bring educational benefit through the provision of a high-quality learning environment. It will improve opportunities for further inclusion of children and young people with additional support needs and will be a positive step in developing further

tolerance and respect. However, during the consultation, stakeholders raised a number of justifiable concerns with regard to taking close regard of the needs of children and young people in designing the new Rosslyn School and in the local library and most especially the local council office being included within the school building. In taking forward and finalising this proposal, the council needs to work closely with stakeholders in addressing these concerns. The council needs to reassure parents, staff and young people that it has listened to their concerns over safety and security and that it is taking appropriate steps to ensure the competing demands of different users of Viewforth High School are managed sensitively.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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