

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Falkirk Council to permanently relocate the Mariner Support Service from Weedingshall to the Laurieston Campus.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended) (the 2010 Act)*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Falkirk Council's proposal to permanently relocate the Mariner Support Service from Weedingshall to the Laurieston Campus. 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 young people of the school; any other users; young people likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other 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 19 September 2017 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 Weedingshall and the Laurieston Campus, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Falkirk Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Act 2010*.

2.2 The consultation ran from 23 August until 6 October 2017. The council announced the consultation in local press and information, including the proposal paper, was placed on the council website and in council buildings. Copies of the proposal were provided to parents. Stakeholders were invited to respond to the proposal through a proforma. A public meeting was held on 19 September 2017. Less than ten stakeholders attended. The council made appropriate arrangements to consult with young people and staff. During the consultation period the council received less than ten responses from parents and stakeholders. All were in favour of the permanent relocation of the service.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The Mariner Support Service is a multi-professional education provision for young people of secondary age who are experiencing levels of social and emotional distress which affects their ability to access mainstream provision. The relocation from Weedingshall to the Laurieston Campus took place in August 2016.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that the proposal is of educational benefit. The building at Weedingshall was not suitable to meet the wellbeing and learning needs of the young people. It did not provide staff with appropriate facilities for learning, teaching and professional learning. HM Inspectors agree with the view of the council that the Laurieston Campus provides better facilities. However, HM Inspectors noted that aspects of the Laurieston Campus require attention to ensure a quality environment for young people. In particular, improvements to the appearance of the inside of the building and services. There is not yet a sufficiency of facilities to ensure young people can progress their learning in all curricular areas.

3.3 Young people agree that Weedingshall was not an appropriate learning environment for them. They are more content with the Laurieston Campus. Parents who responded to the consultation and who met with HM Inspectors agree with the proposal. They view the Laurieston Campus as a more appropriate learning environment. However, they note that there are aspects of the buildings which require attention to bring them to an acceptable standard. HM Inspectors agree these observations are justified. All staff who spoke with HM Inspectors agree with the proposal. However, they also note that the Laurieston Campus and the resources within do not enable them to teach all areas of the curriculum as they would wish. Staff feel the buildings and outdoor areas are not yet of an acceptable standard to ensure the wellbeing of all young people. HM Inspectors agree these views are reasonable.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors believe that the proposal has educational benefit for young people, their families and staff. Weedingshall was not an appropriate environment. The Laurieston Campus provides improved classroom environments and a wider range of facilities. In its final paper, the council will need to reassure stakeholders that planned and other improvements will be made to the buildings in a timely manner to ensure young people receive their entitlement to an appropriately wide curriculum and benefit from a quality learning environment which meets their needs.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
October 2017**