

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to build an intergenerational campus in Jedburgh; permanently close Howdenburn Primary School and Nursery, Parkside Primary School and Nursery, Jedburgh Grammar School and Howdenburn Schoolhouse education support base; to rezone the catchment areas of the primary schools and amend the transition arrangements for children attending Ancrum Primary 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 Scottish Borders Council's proposal to build an intergenerational campus in Jedburgh; permanently close Howdenburn Primary School and Nursery, Parkside Primary School and Nursery, Jedburgh Grammar School and Howdenburn Schoolhouse education support base; to rezone the catchment areas of the primary schools and amend the transition arrangements for children attending Ancrum Primary 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 Howdenburn Primary School and Nursery, Parkside Primary School and Nursery, Jedburgh Grammar School, Howdenburn Schoolhouse education support base and Ancrum Primary 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 30 May 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 Howdenburn Primary School and Nursery, Parkside Primary School and Nursery, Jedburgh Grammar School, Howdenburn Schoolhouse education support base and Ancrum Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Scottish Borders 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 Almost all stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors were very positive and spoke highly about their opportunities to be involved in the consultation process. Over 500 people attended early engagement events on 25 and 26 April 2017. The formal consultation period ran from 8 May until 18 June 2017. Formal notices were given to relevant stakeholders. Information was shared in the local media during weeks beginning 1 and 8 May 2017, outlining the proposal and the public meeting. The public meeting was held on 30 May 2017. This was led by senior officers from the council and representatives of the parent councils of the schools affected. A number of elected members were present in addition to 260 members of the public. All participants and members of the public who spoke on the night with one exception were in agreement with the proposal. Over 800 people responded to the consultation either on paper or online with a very significant level of overall support. Less than 3% of respondents disagreed with some or all aspects of the proposal. The few concerns raised by mainly local residents were related to vehicle access to the preferred site and the potential loss of mature trees.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal has clear educational benefit. This will allow learning to take place for children and young people aged 2-18, bringing greater potential for continuity and progression in their learning. The condition of a number of existing educational buildings in the town would require significant investment to bring them up to standards expected for 21st Century learning. Improved provision for digital technology has the potential to support innovative use by staff and pupils. Sport and recreation facilities will be much improved and on a par with those currently enjoyed by children and young people in other parts of the council. Importantly, teaching

time will be increased through improved arrangements for accessing sports pitches. The proposal improves the scope for enhanced joint professional learning for teachers and support staff currently working in different locations and in separate sectors. This has the potential to result in more flexible approaches to children's learning in a number of areas, for example, science, technology and drama. The community is very positive about the scope to develop further intergenerational learning and the positive benefits this will bring, including to developing the young workforce. Greater opportunities for learning linked to the world of work will be available to young people of all ages. The new purpose-built accommodation will be an inclusive environment for all children and young people, including those with additional support needs. This will allow all age groups to develop and learn important life skills in a suitable environment. All children and young people, including those in the nursery provision, will have much better access to quality areas to develop their learning outdoors. The new facilities will support the delivery of increased hours for children attending early learning and childcare centres. The creation of a community hub within the new campus will benefit the wider community in terms of improved opportunities for social and recreational use. There is also potential to support economic development.

3.2 Children, staff and parents from Howdenburn Primary School were very positive about the proposal. Children particularly looked forward to improved opportunities for sport, more clubs and activities, showing off their art work in nice surroundings, quiet spaces to work. They liked that all of the town's children would be together in the one site where they were learning in the same place as their friends and older siblings. The nursery currently has very limited outdoor space and the proposal would improve this significantly. Staff are keen to be involved further in making suggestions if the proposal goes ahead.

3.3 All children, staff and parents from Parkside Primary School who spoke with HM Inspectors are delighted with the proposal and noted that the current school building, particularly the nursery class, were in a poor condition. The school community is very positive about the proposal and having more modern up-to-date facilities and resources. Staff feel excited about the proposal and to be part of such an innovative project. Currently, children do not have easy access to outdoors and the surface is slippery in inclement weather. They like the community use which is being proposed. Nursery staff would like more information on arrangements for two year old provision and their deployment in a larger provision. Primary stage teachers would like to continue to be involved in any future decision-making as plans progress. They are particularly keen to be involved in practical decisions, for example, the campus design and how space is used.

3.4 Children, staff and parents from Ancrum Primary School who spoke with HM Inspectors are all in favour of the proposal. Their main concern was that there is equity in terms of accessing resources, particularly digital technology. Parents would also like the council to explore the possibility of having an early learning and childcare setting for children aged three to four to encourage local children to attend the school and remain as pupils in Ancrum. All pupils who met with HM Inspectors considered that the proposal was worthwhile. They were very well informed about the proposal, including resources and community use of the building. They are keen

to be involved in having a say in the proposed new school. For example, the new school badge, uniform and the name of the campus.

3.5 Parents, staff and young people from Jedburgh Grammar are very positive about the proposal. They saw benefits in greater flexibility with staffing and delivery of the curriculum. The young people look forward to improved specialist rooms for science, information and communication technology, art and drama that would provide the best opportunities, including for school performances and shows. Young people described current traffic arrangements around their school as hectic and dangerous. However, they acknowledged that recently this had improved. Stakeholders all recognised the need for improved social areas inside and within the grounds of the proposed new school building. Parents and young people welcome aspects of the proposal which will provide opportunities to be more creative, working in partnership with the local college and businesses, and in so doing widen choices for young people. Staff are pleased with the prospect of less teaching time being lost through easier access to college courses and sports facilities.

3.6 If the proposal goes ahead, young people with additional needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorders who would be due to attend the Howdenburn Schoolhouse, will see the benefits of improved accessibility, more appropriate facilities for learning and personal care and increased opportunities to socialise with their peer group in the new campus.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors strongly agree that the proposal has the potential to bring significant educational benefits to the children, young people and community of Jedburgh. Children, staff, parents and almost all of the community are excited and energised by the prospect of the enhanced facilities and the improved experiences this will bring for children, young people and local residents. Stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors were extremely positive about all of the town's children coming together to learn in the one establishment. The proposal will help Scottish Borders Council meet its obligations to secure best value by making efficient and effective use of its school estate as well as increase the hours for nursery-aged children. In taking the proposal forward, Scottish Borders Council should continue to work closely with stakeholders to maintain the strong community 'buy-in' to the development. In so doing, they should also provide re-assurance to the few locals who raised concerns that these will be addressed appropriately as plans are more fully developed.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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