

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School, Yarrow and Philiphaugh Community School, Selkirk.**

August 2019

## 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](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Scottish Borders Council's proposal to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School on or before 31 December 2019. 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 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 statutory 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 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 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:

- 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 sites of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Scottish Borders Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 10 May 2019 to 25 June 2019. Copies of the proposal were made available electronically on the council website. An online response form was set up on the consultation website. The consultation was advertised in the local press. Public meetings were held at Philiphaugh Community School and Yarrow Primary School. Both meetings were held on 30 May 2019. No members of the public attended the public meeting at Philiphaugh Community School. Ten members of the public attended the public meeting at Yarrow Primary School. The majority were supportive of the proposal.

2.3 The council received 32 responses. Of these, 31 were in support of the proposal. The potential benefits were identified as ensuring the long term sustainability of Yarrow Primary School and improving social engagement opportunities for children.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Yarrow Primary School is a non-denominational primary school in the Yarrow Valley and is within Selkirk High School's catchment zone. It is classified by the Scottish Government as a remote rural school. Council figures indicate that there are currently 11 primary aged pupils living within the catchment for Yarrow Primary School. The current school roll has diminished significantly over time with the school now operating at 26% capacity. Future projections do not indicate a growth in pupil numbers. Philiphaugh Community School is a non-denominational primary school located in Selkirk. It has a capacity for 150 pupils. There are currently 125 pupils in attendance. This equates to 83% occupancy.

3.2 The council has set out a reasonable case for the proposal to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School. The proposal recognises the educational benefits of attending a small rural school and the learning experience offered. The proposal to amend the catchment area will increase the sustainability of Yarrow Primary School through increasing the school roll and provide a viable rural school option for families within the area. The school will remain a key part of the local Yarrow Valley community. There will be improved opportunities for children currently attending Yarrow Primary School to engage with a wider peer group, make new friends and participate in team sports/recreational events. The provision of transport from Yarrowford to Yarrow Primary School will ensure that children in the Yarrow Valley have parity of access to learning and opportunities in their communities.

3.3 All parents, staff and children from Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. Staff and parents at Yarrow Primary School welcomed the longer term sustainability for the school. Any concerns about the potential impact of the loss of the school on the community were allayed. They thought engagement with a wider peer group at age and stage would improve their children's learning. The provision of transport from Yarrowford to Yarrow Primary School was seen as supportive to families. Children at Yarrow Primary School welcomed the potential for improved social interaction and a chance to make new friends. However, they were concerned that the addition of new children might disrupt the harmonious atmosphere they currently experienced. Parents and staff at Philiphaugh Community School did not see the proposal having any detriment to their school as the numbers involved would be minimal.

### 4. Summary

Scottish Borders Council's proposal to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School has clear educational benefits. Children will benefit from attending a small rural school and the positive learning experience offered. Increasing the Yarrow Primary School roll has the potential to provide a more viable and sustainable rural school option for families within the area. Children in the Yarrow Valley will have parity of access to learning and opportunities. The school will remain a key part of the local Yarrow Valley community.

**HM Inspectors  
August 2019**