

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to relocate Beatlie School, Livingston.

October 2021

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 West Lothian Council's proposal to relocate Beatlie School, Livingston. Section two 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the 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 virtual public meeting held on 9 September 2021 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
- virtual visit to the Beatlie Campus, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation period ran from 16 August until 24 September 2021. The council held a public meeting to discuss the proposal on the evening of 9 September 2021. The meeting was virtual, which took into account health risks associated with COVID-19. There were four attendees at the meeting and a number of local authority staff. All attendees expressed support for the proposals. The council received two written representations from West Lothian Pupil Councils and both supported the proposals. The council communicated the plan widely. This included placing articles in the local print press and publishing the proposal online. They distributed hard copies of the proposal within the local area and translation and communication services were available upon request.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council's proposal is to design a new school building for the children and young people who will attend Beatlie School. This would be located a short distance from the existing school site. The current provision is not purpose-built and requires modernising and upgrading. The plan takes into account the complex additional support needs of the pupils and proposes an improved learning environment with a variety of educational benefits. The relocated school will have enhanced facilities such as devoted areas for hydrotherapy and physiotherapy using trampolines (also known as rebound therapy). The council consulted school leaders when designing classrooms and other facilities. The plans reflect the educational, social and health needs of the learners. The proposed building will also have enhanced hygiene areas for use during personal care, as well as improved learning spaces with access to the outdoors from each classroom. The new space will accommodate special equipment used by learners who are likely to have a range of severe and complex communication and physical needs. The proposal takes into account the Equality Act 2010 and is potentially a substantial improvement on the current Beatlie Campus.

3.2 Parents, school staff and senior leaders represented the children and young people's views through a process of advocacy during meetings with HM Inspectors. The school community roundly welcomes the plans for the new school building. They think that the existing building has a number of significant shortfalls, despite school staff making good use of it currently. Parents believe that some of the equipment in use by staff, is unwieldy, time-consuming and in need of improvement. For example, staff take the rebound therapy trampoline in and out of storage for each use. This results in a loss of teaching time and places a moving and handling burden on the staff involved. They look forward to new solutions and opportunities for increased access to equipment, which will enhance the mobility and comfort of the learners.

3.3 Senior leaders and staff are pleased that the proposal gives increased access to appropriate outdoor learning spaces to enhance the curriculum. The proposed dedicated craft and design and kitchen spaces will also allow staff more flexibility in offering life skills and a broader range of experiences and outcomes. School staff acknowledge that the move away from the current location would mean pupils have further to travel to the library and other community amenities. They recognise that an effort should be made to continue to keep Beatlie at the heart of the community despite its relocation.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal has clear educational benefits. A new school building could provide a high-quality learning environment, with space for specialised equipment, therapeutic interventions and for teaching life-skills. There is potential to improve the curriculum through the enhanced facilities, for example, in outdoor education and technologies.

Parents, school staff and the wider community agree that the new campus will bring improved experiences and outcomes for children and young people.

HM Inspectors
October 2021