

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to establish a new non-denominational secondary school at Winchburgh; and review catchment areas and admission and transition arrangements.

December 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 West Lothian Council's proposal to establish a new non-denominational secondary school at Winchburgh; review admission arrangements in order to establish the catchment area for the new school; review admission arrangements arising from alterations to the non-denominational secondary school catchment areas at Linlithgow Academy and Broxburn Academy; and review transition arrangements from primary to secondary 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 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 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
- 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 site of Linlithgow Academy and Winchburgh Primary School, 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 26 September until 15 November 2019. Ten people attended a public meeting which was held on 9 October 2019. Three stakeholders and Winchburgh Community Council responded to the consultation and expressed overall support for the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council is responding to pressures on secondary school rolls, in part brought about by new housing developments. The current and projected rolls indicate that secondary schools are at, or very near, their working capacity. HM Inspectors agree that the proposed new secondary school will help to reduce that pressure. The proposal for a new school also has the potential to offer modern facilities for learning with flexible spaces and modern IT equipment. The school will be closer geographically to the community it serves and has the potential to develop strong links between the school and the Winchburgh community. Residents may benefit from access to a range of facilities for community use. The school will be able to work initially within a cluster with Winchburgh Primary School as its associated primary. The council hopes that parental involvement will also be enhanced through the relatively short distances between home and school.

3.2 All stakeholders agree with the proposal to build the new school, alter the catchment area and refresh the transition arrangements. The council is proposing to populate the new school gradually over time. In the first year with only the new S1, adding a new year group every year for the next five years. A few parents disagree with this aspect of the proposal and would prefer, for example, the school to cater for years S1-S3 in the first year of the new school. All stakeholders welcomed the commitment from the council regarding the parental choice of maintaining links with a secondary school should siblings currently attend either Linlithgow or Broxburn Academies. The Community Council raised the issue of safe routes to school which West Lothian Council will address as part of its access strategy.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposed new secondary school and the associated catchment changes have the potential to relieve pressure on the existing local provision of secondary education. The new school has the potential to provide modern, improved facilities closer to the young peoples' homes and communities. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to work with stakeholders in terms of planning routes to the new school and clarifying entry arrangements for year groups of young people.

HM Inspectors
December 2019