

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO MERGE THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES UNDER ONE HEADTEACHER OF WITCHHILL SCHOOL, KILMARNOCK WITH WOODSTOCK SCHOOL, KILMARNOCK IN AUGUST 2006 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.**

**APPENDIX A - THE CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT**  
**APPENDIX B - SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM INTERESTED PARTIES ON THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION IN THE MEMBER'S LOUNGE.**

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

#### **THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL:**

- **TO MERGE THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES UNDER ONE HEADTEACHER OF WITCHHILL SCHOOL, KILMARNOCK WITH WOODSTOCK SCHOOL, KILMARNOCK IN AUGUST 2006 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.**

#### **Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** On 21 March 2006, East Ayrshire Council's Education Committee approved the issuing of a consultative document which proposed that the management structures of Witchhill and Woodstock Schools should be merged from August 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

A copy of the consultative document is attached as Appendix A.

- 1.2** The main issues identified in the consultation document were as follows :-

- The development of a flexible and coherent approach for young people across a range of learning needs, for example easier links with associated services such as social work and health.
- Provision of a modern and progressive curriculum for all young people delivered through a modernised management structure with the inclusion of a principal teacher implemented through "A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".
- Being part of a larger establishment as a reassurance to children and families of the present Witchhill School regarding the continuity of services.
- The benefits to Woodstock School through access to a wider pool of staff experience.

### **2. THE CONSULTATION**

- 2.1** Written representations on the Committee's proposals were sought from interested parties in terms of the Education (Publications and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 and Amendment Regulations 1987, 1988 and 1989.

- 2.2** In accordance with normal practice copies of the consultation documents were distributed to the staff and parents of the educational establishments affected by the proposals. Copies were also distributed to the Chairs of

School Boards, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, local elected members, and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

- 2.3** The existence of the document was publicised in the local press and copies were made widely available in the Education Offices and affected schools, in the local community and to local interest groups.
- 2.4** Meetings were organised by the School Boards of Woodstock School and Witchhill School which took place on 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April respectively. In addition specific meetings were held with both school boards themselves and the staff of each school. All of these meetings were attended by a senior officer of the Department of Educational and Social Services.
- 2.5** A specific e-mail address was created to facilitate the consultation by electronic means.

### **3. VIEWS EXPRESSED**

- 3.1** A total of 20 written submissions were received. In addition 6 electronic submissions were made. These submissions included those from :
- Witchhill School Board;
  - Woodstock School Board;
  - Head of Witchhill School;
  - Headteacher of Woodstock School
  - Witchhill School staff;
  - Woodstock School staff;
  - Local Association Secretary of the Educational Institute of Scotland;
  - Parents and other relatives;
  - Chair of Woodstock Parents' Support Group
  - Headteacher of Kilmarnock Academy; and
  - The Chaplain of Witchhill School.

Some respondents took the opportunity to make more than one submission.

A full summary of respondents is included at Appendix B.

In addition to the written submissions, the meetings referred to in sections 2.4, above, enabled a number of significant issues to be raised. The following paragraphs summarise the issues raised at the meetings and in written responses to the consultative document.

- 3.2** The Witchhill School Board felt the proposals were unacceptable and short-term in nature. There were concerns about safeguarding the interests of the Witchhill children. The school board identified 9 safeguards that they felt were necessary under the proposal. These safeguards included the need to maintain clear communication channels for parents with the school management, special recognition of the care needs of the children, the need to ensure no diminution of service and difficulties with staff selection when two

schools were involved. It was felt that a longer term plan was needed. Each of these concerns was supported by a detailed argument by the Board. It was also felt that the two campuses were too far apart to allow effective management under one head, but that a single campus development was feasible. The school board expressed strong concerns that the proposal was insufficiently sensitive to the particular needs of the Witchhill children. The strength of the school board's feelings against the proposal was emphasised.

- 3.3** The Woodstock School Board expressed concern about the availability of the headteacher to parents under this proposal and that administrative difficulties would be created between the two campuses. A particular example was the headteacher having to service two school boards. Both schools, it was felt needed a separate identity. Concerns were expressed about the future, however, and alternative suggestions were offered.
- 3.4** The meeting of Witchhill School parents reflected concerns about parental and staff access to the headteacher under the proposal. They recognised the issue but wished to see a longer term plan for the school. This proposal was felt to create more uncertainty than it resolved in that it did not sufficiently recognise the needs of the children or parents of Witchhill.
- 3.5** The meeting of Woodstock School parents felt that the proposal might threaten the identity of both schools and their future. Concerns were expressed about the adequacy of present facilities and the potential loss of staff expertise. Access to the headteacher by parents was seen to be a very important matter that might be jeopardised under the proposal. They felt it was also important for the headteacher to be available for and know the individual children, and for this reason favoured a single campus development.
- 3.6** The staff of Witchhill School collectively and under some individual responses recognised that the proposal addresses the future difficulty of staff replacement and low pupil numbers and represented a way forward. However, reservations were expressed about the implementation of the proposal and how it would develop in practical terms such as the continuity of a member of management being on site. A particular difficulty was the headteacher being responsible for two separate campuses. The particular pupil management and care demands of Witchhill were cited as support for this position, and particularly the need for a head experienced in this area of provision. It was difficult for the staff to identify how a merging of the management structures would directly benefit the children and that their care needs were paramount together with the school identity and ethos. They felt there was the opportunity to look at the needs of both schools and sharing of resources. A number of other issues were raised together with suggestions for the future.
- 3.7** The staff of Woodstock School were against the proposal and raised a number of concerns. Although they recognised the issue at the heart of the proposal they felt that improvements resulting from it would be minimal. Concerns were expressed over links between the curriculum between the two

separate establishments. They perceived problems of a headteacher presence for pupils with particular needs and their availability for parents. Particular issues such as servicing two school boards and learning partnerships were identified. There was some uncertainty expressed about the role of the new principal teacher. The proposal was seen as a first step. But it could in their view create many logistical problems. There were also concerns over parental confidence. Like other respondents some alternatives were offered.

- 3.8** A number of individual written comments were received from parents. These reflected concerns about the headteacher presence between two campuses and the need for convenient parental access. The comments reflected concerns about the care needs of the children and the excellence in provision that had currently been developed.
- 3.9** Other written comments from respondents including members of the community, the EIS and an associated school reflected similar views to those above. These centred on the particular needs of the children involved and the possible impact of a headteacher presence being divided between two establishments. The ethos of the schools concerned was cited by at least one respondent.

#### **4. COMMENTS ON THE VIEWS EXPRESSED**

- 4.1** Taken together, the comments received relate to a small number of key issues:
- The origin of the proposal.
  - The particular needs of the children in both schools.
  - Communication with parents.
  - The implications of a single headteacher supervising two separate campuses.
  - The future of provision.
- 4.2** There was a general recognition that the proposal was designed to address an issue that is well-known to the school boards, parents and staff of Witchhill and Woodstock Schools, and that this has existed for some time. Very few of the comments received therefore challenged the basis of the proposal or its reason for being brought forward. The consultation exercise has therefore reinforced the idea that there is an issue that requires to be addressed.
- 4.3** Notwithstanding the recognition of the issue in paragraph 4.2 no response was received that completely endorsed the proposal and the large majority argued against it on grounds that it insufficiently recognised the needs of the children concerned. It was repeatedly pointed out by respondents that the children had sometimes extreme care needs requiring the availability of the maximum of staff expertise and experience. For parents, the hallmark of this was immediate access to the headteacher as a basis for inspiring confidence in how their children were being cared for. Staff also felt the need for support on site. Parents and staff were unanimous that this aspect of the

headteacher's role was key to the ethos of both establishments. Given the needs of the children, such concerns should be weighed very heavily

- 4.4** The arguments above were linked to concerns, again frequently expressed, that the supervision of two campuses, functioning as two separate schools would place an additional burden on the headteacher. This related to the separate ethos of the schools, the differing care needs and curriculum between the two, and the need to service two school boards. The strengthening of the management arrangements proposed were not felt to address this issue. Again, to be convinced that their children are in receipt of the highest quality provision, such concerns about the management of the school are significant.
- 4.5** Having recognised the issue giving rise to the proposal, a number of respondents felt a wider examination of the matter would be helpful to look at the future of provision. This recognition adds weight to the views discussed above in 4.3 and 4.4.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1** For the level of provision made by Woodstock and Witchhill Schools the confidence of parents, children and staff is essential. While at the practical level it is possible to address many of the concerns identified in the consultation, other issues such as the matter of parental and staff access to the headteacher and the confidence that this brings are more problematic. Given the level of need of the children such considerations should take precedence over the gains that would have been made under the proposal.
- 5.2** A number of consultation responses, including those of the school boards suggested, or made reference to, the desirability of a single campus development for the children of the two schools. These positive suggestions would represent, potentially, a possible way forward to address the matter at the heart of the proposal.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1** It is recommended that the Education Committee agree:
- (i) not to proceed with the proposal to merge the management structures under one headteacher of Witchhill School, Kilmarnock with Woodstock School, Kilmarnock in August 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter and
  - (ii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to investigate the potential for and, possibilities offered by a single campus development and provide a future report to Committee.
  - (iii) to otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services  
GRS/GRS  
08 May 2006

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Written responses from consultation document

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel (01563) 576017.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational & Social Services

## APPENDIX A

### ORIGINAL CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

Members wishing further information should contact John Mulgrew, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel (01563) 576017 or Graham Short, Head of Service, Quality Improvement, Tel (01563) 576089



**East Ayrshire**  
COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

## A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

The proposals in this consultation document have implications for:

- Woodstock School
- Witchhill School

This document has been issued by East Ayrshire Council Education Committee for consultation in terms of the Education (Publications and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulation 1981 and Amendment Regulation 1987, 1988 and 1989.

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL SERVICES**

**THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT**

- The proposal is to merge the management structures under one headteacher of Witchhill School, Kilmarnock with Woodstock School, Kilmarnock in August 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The two schools that are the focus of this proposal have developed a high reputation for their support to children and families. They offer specialist accommodation together with well-trained, experienced and dedicated staff. This proposal seeks to safeguard and strengthen this quality of provision for the children and young people of both schools.
- 1.2 Over recent years Witchhill School has undergone a steady but constant reduction of its roll. This trend is attributable to a change in the nature of the additional support needs population within the north of the authority.
- 1.3 Changes have also taken place in the nature of provision expected in within the field of special education. Most obviously, there has been the introduction of Higher Still courses, target setting and the elaborated curriculum. This has implications for how special schools are managed since the focus of work has changed with more emphasis towards structured curricular provision.

## **2. PRESENT POSITION**

### **2.1 Witchhill School**

- 2.1.1 Witchhill School is situated at the junction of Witch Road and Hill Street Kilmarnock. The children and young people in Witchhill School are amongst the most vulnerable in the Authority area. Each child needs a well developed educational and care package. Some children require access to modern and large scale mobility devices such as hoists and standing frames to allow them to benefit from their education. Specialist care areas are also required.

The present roll of the school is 6 and its capacity is 20.

- 2.1.2 A detailed roll projection is shown as Appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 The established management posts for Witchhill School are :
  - 1 Head Teacher
  - 1 Depute Head

### **2.2 Woodstock School**

**2.2.1** Woodstock School is situated in Woodstock Street, Kilmarnock. The accommodation was recently extended to accommodate a 16+ base. There are also a number of learning bases and specialist areas such as a home economics base. Owing to the needs of the children, combined with the size of the roll, space is now at a premium in this school.

The present roll of the school is 30 and its capacity is 35.

**2.2.2** The management structure presently consists of  
1 Head Teacher  
1 Depute Head

**2.5.3** The children of Woodstock School have a range of needs. They require significant levels of support from staff, but have mobility and are physically active. Some children are diagnosed as having autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), and therefore have particular care needs.

### **3. PROPOSAL**

**3.1** It is proposed to merge the management structures under one headteacher of Witchhill School, Kilmarnock with Woodstock School, Kilmarnock in August 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The new structure would consist of :

1 x headteacher  
1 x depute head  
1 x principal teacher.

**3.2** Using established arrangements, the post of headteacher and depute head would be ring-fenced to staff of that level already in either of the two schools affected.

### **4. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROPOSAL**

**4.1** This proposal recognises the range of learning needs of children, and that they exist on a gradual spectrum of provision. It will therefore allow for a much more flexible and coherent approach to be developed for young people. For example it will be easier to link with associated services such as social work and health for transition and care planning.

**4.2** The proposal also recognises that all young people are entitled to a modern and progressive curriculum. The new and modernised management structure with the inclusion of a principal teacher will facilitate curriculum development and will be implemented within the terms of "A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

**4.3** Being part of a larger establishment will enable the Authority to provide reassurance to the children and families of the present Witchhill School

regarding the continuity of services. Woodstock School will also benefit from access to a wider pool of staff experience.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** This proposal recognises that the individual needs of children of both schools must be considered fully. The support of skilled and caring staff in sufficient numbers has been essential to the success of both schools to date and this will be maintained and enhanced. This proposal will continue and enhance the conditions in which choices can be offered within a diversity of provision. The educational opportunities for children, young people and staff will be improved as a result of this proposal.
- 5.2** The merging of the management structures of the two schools under one headteacher would be done within the terms of "A Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". School Boards or any subsequent formal parental body would also require to amalgamate under the conditions of the relevant legislation.
- 5.3** The staffing and resourcing of special schools is closely related to the individual needs of children. It is an important part of this proposal that the needs of the children in both schools are paramount. This principle will be maintained in the new structure.
- 5.5** Staff and trade unions will be consulted on any aspect of this proposal that affects individuals or groups of employees.
- 5.6** The best interests of children and young people are at the heart of this proposal. This new provision will continue to apply best practice in additional support, including the involvement of parents, children and young people in any decisions or plans that affect them.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1** It is recommended that the Education Committee agree to adopt the proposal that:
- (i) The management structures of Witchhill School Kilmarnock should be merged with Woodstock School Kilmarnock under one headteacher.
  - (ii) This merger will take effect from August 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

It is further recommended that:

- (i) all interested parties be invited to make written or electronic submissions on the proposal to the Executive Director of Educational & Social Services, East Ayrshire Council, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock KA3 7BU, E-mail: [education.consultation@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:education.consultation@east-ayrshire.gov.uk) no later than 05 May 2006

- (ii) the Executive Director prepare a report on the results of the consultative process for consideration at a future meeting of the Education Committee.

GRS/GRS

30/05/2006

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Detailed Roll Projection of Witchhill School

Session	Pre School	Primary	Secondary	Post 16	TOTAL ROLL
2005/06	1	2	3	0	6
2006/07	3	2	2	1	8
2007/08	3	1	3	1	8
2008/09	2	2	2	2	8

THE CURRENT SCHOOL ROLL IS 6 PUPILS

THE SCHOOL CAPACITY IS 20 PUPILS

## Appendix 2: Detailed Roll Projection of Woodstock School

<b>Session</b>	<b>Pre School</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Post 16</b>	<b>TOTAL ROLL</b>
2005/06	0	21	8	1	30
2006/07	2	18	7	5	32
2007/08	2	16	8	6	32
2008/09	1	11	12	7	31

THE CURRENT SCHOOL ROLL IS 30 PUPILS

THE SCHOOL CAPACITY IS 35 PUPILS

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF RESPONSES TO CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT TO MERGE WITCHHILL AND WOODSTOCK SCHOOL

Ref. No	Date Received	Name	Date Responded
1	20/04/06	Mr E Bryson, 56 Richardson Avenue	21/04/06
2	24/04/06	Mr H Muir, 30 North Hamilton Street	25/04/06
3	21/04/06	Mr W McGuiness, 11 Loudoun Avenue, Galston	26/04/06
4	26/04/06	Ms Letitia Boyd, 14 Woodlands Grove	27/04/06
5	27/04/06	Staff of Woodstock School	20/05/06
6	03/05/06	Iain Harvey, EIS, Loudoun Academy	03/05/06
7	03/05/06	Carole Ford, Kilmarnock Academy	03/05/06
8	03/05/06	Elizabeth Curtis, Witchhill School	03/05/06
9	04/05/06	Rev Barclay, 1 Thirdpart Place	05/05/06
10	04/05/06	Mary Silk, Woodstock School	05/05/06
11	04/05/06	Linda Macphee, Woodstock School	05/05/06
12	05/05/06	J & A White, 6 Cessnock Road, Galston	05/05/06
13	05/05/06	Mr & Mrs H Muir, 26 Orchard St, Galston	05/05/06
14	05/05/06	Elizabeth Higton, Gorsebraehead, Darvel	05/05/06
15	05/05/06	Helen McGarry, 75 Langside Avenue	05/05/06
16	05/05/06	Elizabeth Higton, Witchhill School	05/05/06
17	04/05/06	Kathleen Jardine <b>(via e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
18	04/05/06	Jacqueline McGuiness <b>(via e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
19	04/05/06	William McGuiness <b>(via e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
20	26/04/06	Paul, Belinda & Melissa Edwards <b>(via e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
21	12/04/06	Lynne Pringle <b>(e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
22	02/05/06	Belinda Edwards on behalf of Woodstock parent Support Group <b>(e-mail)</b>	08/05/06
23	05/05/06	Ann Kelly, 60 MacKinlay Place	11/05/06
24	05/05/06	Lesleyann Shepherd, 3 John Kennedy Place	11/05/06
25	05/05/06	Olive Cameron, 16 Bunting Place	11/05/06