

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ESTATE EVALUATION EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR CHANGE

This paper considers the type of information and criteria that will be assessed to establish if and where changes should be proposed to the pattern of school provision.

### **National Context**

The Scottish Government issued guidance in 2004 entitled “Additional Guidance on Local Authority Proposals for the School Estate, Including School Closure”. The guidance indicates the type of factors that should be taken into account when considering proposals. It indicates the mix and weight of the factors will be different in each case. A summary of the factors set out in the guidance is listed below:

- (a) The Educational Case – the current disadvantages of present arrangements and the improvements the proposals are intended to deliver – in the quality of the learning and teaching environment; opportunities for pupils optimal learning and social interaction; how best to deliver a modern, flexible curriculum; and access to general and specialist facilities.
- (b) Travel distances and times, including safety, the availability of transport and access to extra curricular activities.
- (c) Future pupil and population projections.
- (d) Community Planning and Use – with the overall objective of better delivery of public services. How a school is integral to the local community.
- (e) Rural Sustainability and Development.
- (f) Urban Communities and Regeneration.
- (g) Financial Considerations – authorities have a statutory duty to provide efficient school provision and to secure best value, where authorities are striving to derive maximum benefit from the deployment of finite resources.
- (h) Other alternatives for using the accommodation – eg shared use of the school building.
- (i) The unique local factors

The guidance stresses that any proposals for change must provide advantages both locally and on the wider scale.

### **Children and Families Estate Evaluation Forum Approach**

The Council’s Children and Families Estate Evaluation Forum agreed that all schools be reviewed against three initial, basic criteria, those being:

1. Educational Outcomes – delivering an improved outcome for any children affected by any proposal for change, and for the wider community.
2. Parental Choice – following patterns of choice of schools already expressed by parents through the operation of the Parents Charter.
3. Value for Money – deriving maximum benefit from finite resources.

It was agreed that these basic criteria would be supplemented by ‘Qualitative Criteria’ which would be taken into account in the development of any detailed proposals for change to the estate.

Taking into account the national guidance, the early suggestions provided through the CCWP and Parent Councils, the feedback from the stakeholders to the Estate Evaluation Forum and the standard information the Council would expect to provide, the criteria would include the following types of information:

- Educational Outcomes: provision of information set out in HMIE reports and the Council's own system of School Review.
- Buildings: location; description of use / facilities available; condition; fitness for purpose (including accessibility); site size; adaptations necessary as a result of any proposed changes.
- School roll: historic/previous trends; current roll levels; roll composition (parental choice indicator); social mix and levels of deprivation; forecasts; new housing developments; occupancy levels – current and forecast – to determine the use of building and opportunities for accommodating additional pupils.
- Catchment area: geographical description; patterns of parental choice (showing the relationship with neighbouring schools), including the relationship with secondary school catchment areas.
- The ability to deliver on the Government's class size commitments.
- Travel distances; safe routes to school and traffic flows.
- Nursery provision – current provision, accommodation and take up; proposed provision.
- Provision of specialist services – such as language units and other special needs provision.
- Community use of the school –activities such as after school care clubs, sports clubs; school lets to the wider community; the school grounds' wider contribution to the community.
- Opportunities to deliver integrated services – delivering primary school, early years and child care, community and specialised services from a single building.
- Alternatives to reduce capacity – such as removal of Temporary Units
- Running costs: annual building running costs and required future spend; staffing costs; opportunities for redistribution of resources; potential capital receipts released as a result of the proposal.
- Benefits created for children, including enhancement of school environments/buildings, through disposal of any surplus sites/buildings

This information/evaluation would be set out for all affected schools, including the schools proposed to receive new pupils as a result of the change. The evaluation would also be undertaken for the proposed resulting school organisations.

### **Recommendation**

The CCWP is requested to consider the content of this report and indicate any further factors they would wish to see included in the evaluation of the primary school estate.