



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Report No. 24-004

16 January 2024

**New Findlay Creek Elementary School Study – Approval of Opening
Grade Structure, Program Offering, and Attendance Boundary**

**Key Contact: Randall Gerrior, Associate Director, Business
Operations 613-596-8211 ext. 8881**

PURPOSE:

1. To obtain Board approval of the opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for a new elementary school to be opened in the Findlay Creek neighborhood, as well as other associated changes.

CONTEXT:

2. The Findlay Creek-Leitrim community is a rapidly growing development area within the City of Ottawa. By the end of 2022, there were approximately 6,400 homes built and occupied in the neighborhood. A significant number of building permits for new residential units were also issued in 2023, and an additional 2,500 units at the least are still expected to be constructed over the next several years.

The community is currently serviced by one elementary school, Vimy Ridge Public School, which offers Kindergarten to Grade 8 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs. Vimy Ridge Public School opened in 2017 as the first of the two planned OCDSB elementary schools for the community. It remains the only public elementary school within the Findlay Creek Community serving local students.

Significant enrolment pressures exist at Vimy Ridge Public School. The school has a capacity for 674 students. As of 31 October 2023, enrolment at the school was 956, a utilization rate of 142%. The school is currently operating with 21 portables on site.

The need for a second 674 pupil place elementary school within the Findlay Creek Community was first identified as a capital priority in 2018. The site was acquired on 22 October 2021. In April 2022, funding for the new school was announced by the Ministry of Education. The 2.55 ha (6.3 acre) site is located at 820 Miikana Road, at the southeast intersection of Kelly Farm Drive and Miikana Road. Please refer to the general location map attached as Appendix A. The site is currently under construction with a scheduled opening of September 2024.

As per Report No. 22-037, interim accommodation measures currently exist for Vimy Ridge Public School area students. Until the New Findlay Creek Elementary School is open and operating, new students moving into the Vimy Ridge Public School attendance boundary area as of 1 January, 2023 and beyond are currently being directed to Robert Bateman Public School for Kindergarten to Grade 6 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs, and to Roberta Bondar Public School for Grades 7 and 8 English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs (See Appendix B for Vimy Ridge Public School current attendance boundary map).

In September of 2023, Board approved a study consultation plan and timeline for the setting of an opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School (See Appendix C and Appendix D). This study would also determine the associated changes as a result of the interim measures in place for Vimy Ridge Public School, identified above.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. In accordance with the approved timeline, a locally-formed working group met during the fall of 2023 in order to consider potential options with regards to an opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School. The group was comprised of principals and parent council representatives from impacted schools, and Board staff. Invitations to participate were also sent to Trustees and community associations for the local area.

The following summarizes the key objectives that helped guide the working group process:

- propose an opening grade structure, program offering, and attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School;
- propose a revision to Vimy Ridge Public School's attendance boundary, as well as a designated Grade 7 and 8 attendance boundary until the opening of the New Riverside South Secondary School.
- analyze options with consideration being given to the creation of viable programs, neighborhood alignments, and consistent attendance boundaries to the New Riverside South Secondary School.
- evaluation of the redirection of students that are attending Robert Bateman Public School and Roberta Bondar Public School based on the interim measures in place.

Following a review of potential attendance boundaries and a discussion of local issues and concerns, the working group endorsed the preparation of a proposed plan for the purpose of receiving input from the broader community. The proposed plan was presented at a public consultation meeting held on 29 November 2023 in the gymnasium at Vimy Ridge Public School.

4. The Recommended Plan

New Findlay Creek Elementary School - Opening Grade Structure, Program Offering, and Attendance Boundary

Under the plan, the new school is recommended to be a dual-track Kindergarten to Grade 6 school, offering both an English Program with Core French and an Early French Immersion (EFI) program.

The recommended attendance boundary is comprised of a portion of Vimy Ridge Public School's current attendance boundary. Specifically, that section bounded by all areas east of Bank Street; south of Leitrim Road, west of Hawthorne Road, north of Blais Road; and all areas east of Albion Road South, north of Rideau Road, west of Bank Street, and along a wooded corridor that runs just south of Wood Acres Grove and Netley Circle (See Appendix E).

Given the physical location of Vimy Ridge Public School and the New Findlay Creek Elementary School, staff saw it appropriate to delineate the attendance boundaries by the wooded corridor (stormwater management runoff) located south of Wood Acres Grove and Netley Circle as it is an appropriate separation point between the two community areas. All areas east of Bank Street that are currently in the Vimy Ridge Public School attendance boundary area are also recommended to be included in the New Findlay Creek Elementary School attendance boundary area, as it is both geographically logical while at the same time providing enrolment robust enough to populate the new school while also relieving accommodation pressure from Vimy Ridge Public School.

With support from the Working Group, it was discussed that this boundary appeared to be geographically adequate.

The recommended attendance area includes a significant amount of future residential development. This would serve to make good use of the new building, and serve to accommodate a large number of students locally while also reducing the amount of students attending Vimy Ridge Public School.

Staff are proposing that the school open with a Kindergarten to Grade 6 structure. In September 2025, the New Riverside South Secondary School is scheduled to open and will offer Grades 7 to 12 at full phase-in. Students who are directed to the New Findlay Creek Elementary School will be directed to the New Riverside South Secondary School for Grades 7 to 12.

Vimy Ridge Public School students will also be directed to the New Riverside South Secondary School. As a result of the opening of the New Riverside South Secondary School, Grades 7 to 8 students at Vimy Ridge Public School in the September 2025 school year will be redirected in a block move to the new high school.

Vimy Ridge Public School will continue to offer Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 for the September 2024 school year, and will be reduced to a Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 structure as of September 2025. As of September 2024, Vimy Ridge Public School's current attendance boundary area will be reduced for Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 students (See Appendix F).

For the September 2024 school year, all Grades 7 and 8 students who reside within the recommended New Findlay Creek Elementary School attendance boundary will be directed to, or continue to be directed to Vimy Ridge Public School (See Appendix G).

As noted, the New Findlay Creek Elementary School is scheduled to open in September 2024. Projected enrolments would see the school open with 443 students in 2024. It would then increase to 647 students and a utilization rate of 96% by 2028.

It should be noted that projecting enrolment for a new school can be challenging and is impacted by a number of different factors and assumptions: student movement and choice; the rate of enrolment growth and development; and the presence or absence of other local school options. Enrolment for the new school could therefore vary more than what would typically be expected.

Redirection of Students attending Robert Bateman Public School and Roberta Bondar Public School

As per Report number No. 22-037, any new students moving into the Vimy Ridge Public School attendance boundary after 1 January, 2023 have been directed to Robert Bateman Public School for Kindergarten to Grade 6 English with Core French and Early French Immersion and Roberta Bondar Public School for Grade 7 and 8 English with Core French and Early French Immersion.

The above interim measure was approved by Board in order to temporarily relieve the accommodation pressures that existed at Vimy Ridge Public School until the New Findlay Elementary School was open and operating. As the New Findlay Creek Elementary School is scheduled to open for September 2024, the interim measures will no longer be required.

Student Movement Under the Proposed Plan

Current Kindergarten to Grade 5 students attending Vimy Ridge Public School in the 2023-2024 school year and residing in the new school's recommended attendance boundary area would be relocated to the new school in a block move upon its opening in September 2024.

Current Kindergarten to Grade 5 students attending Robert Bateman Public School in the 2023-2024 school year as a result of the interim measures and reside in the Vimy Ridge Public School or New Findlay Creek Elementary School's attendance boundary would be relocated in a block move in September 2024 to those schools, depending on their home address.

Current Grade 6 students attending Robert Bateman Public School in the 2023-2024 school year as a result of the interim measures would be directed to Vimy Ridge Public School for September 2024 for Grade 7 as per the typical feeding patterns.

The above would serve to alleviate the significant enrolment pressures being experienced at Vimy Ridge Public School. Projected enrolment at Vimy Ridge Public School would be reduced to 616 students in 2024.

As the interim measures will no longer be required in 2024 as a result of the opening of New Findlay Creek Elementary School, Robert Bateman Public School's enrolment will be reduced to a projected 294 students, a utilization of 47% of the school's capacity. Staff anticipate that a possible future review of the Alta Vista/Hunt Club area will occur once the Ministry of Education lifts the

moratorium on the accommodation review process. The result of a future review of that area may prove to provide more robust enrolment for local area schools, including Robert Bateman Public School.

In addition to the above, any current Grade 7 students attending Roberta Bondar Public School as a result of the interim measures, should be provided the one-time option to remain at Roberta Bondar Public School, or attend Vimy Ridge Public School for Grade 8 in September 2024. Staff are proposing this one-time option as it is a small cohort of students and would allow them to graduate with their classmates at Roberta Bondar Public School should they choose to do so.

Given the pressures at Vimy Ridge Public School, staff are not proposing that a grandparenting provision be put in place to permit students who reside within the new school's attendance boundary to continue to attend that school. Moreover, a grandparenting provision would also impact the overall enrolment of the new school.

Additionally, staff is also not proposing that a grandparenting provision be put in place to permit those students who are attending Robert Bateman Public School as a result of the interim measures to continue to attend that school.

5. Input Received Regarding the Proposed Plan

At the Public Consultation Meeting a majority of those in attendance expressed support for the presented plan.

Feedback was provided on alternate considerations for the proposed attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School, however support was also expressed for the new school's proposed attendance area as well as the opening grade structure and program offering.

The following summarizes some of the common themes of input received before, during, and after the Public Consultation Meeting:

- Proposed attendance boundary makes sense given the variables involved.
- Long-term accommodation planning for the Findlay Creek and Riverside South areas should be accounted for when considering the attendance boundary.
- What is the plan should the new school not meet the construction schedule.
- A dual-track program school would help to continue to provide viable access to programming in the community.
- Consideration of future intermediate and secondary patterns in the community.
- Would the new school include pre-school childcare programming and an extended day program.
- How will students impacted by the interim measures be managed as a result of the opening of this school.

All input received by staff during the consultation process has been provided to Trustees in its original form.

Concern was expressed at the Public Consultation Meeting with regards to the proposed attendance boundary area. For example, it was suggested that those areas south of Earl Armstrong Road should be directed to the New Findlay Creek Elementary School as opposed to continuing to be directed to Vimy Ridge Public School. Planning staff examined this suggested revision. Although a viable option geographically, staff are cognizant that the majority of future residential growth within the Findlay Creek neighborhood will be directed to the New Findlay Creek Elementary School, should the recommended attendance boundary be approved. Additional growth from the Riverside South community directed to that school may result in significant overcrowding when the development comes online.

Given the large amount of future residential growth expected within the Riverside South community over the next several years (approximately 24,000 to 32,000 units), it is anticipated that a redirection of that particular area to current and future reserved schools in Riverside South will need to take place.

Additionally, it was suggested that the boundary line be redrawn to run directly along Miikana Road. Staff did not particularly observe this boundary line as logical, as this delineation would result in students who reside directly across the street from the New Findlay Creek Elementary School, not being directed to that school and instead to Vimy Ridge Public School further to the north.

Staff have determined that the recommended attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School and revised attendance boundary for Vimy Ridge Public School are viable options which provide access to programming and balanced and robust projected enrolments for the next several years (See Appendix H).

6. The New Riverside South Secondary School

In fall 2020 capital funding for the construction of a Grade 7 to 12 secondary school in Riverside South was approved by the Ministry of Education. The approved attendance boundary area will include the entire Vimy Ridge Public School attendance boundary area, with the exception of the Boothfield Community, which will be redirected to Steve MacLean Public School upon the opening of the New Riverside South Secondary School as approved in Report No. 23-048.

Upon opening of the New Riverside South Secondary School, Vimy Ridge Public School's grade structure will be reduced to a Kindergarten to Grade 6. All Vimy Ridge Public School students will feed to the new secondary school.

The New Findlay Creek Elementary School recommended attendance boundary, serving both English with Core French and Early French Immersion programs, is a portion of the existing Vimy Ridge Public School attendance boundary. The two schools recommended attendance boundaries would then result in an aligned feeding pattern of students to the New Riverside South Secondary School, thus creating a family of schools.

7. **Staff Recommendation**

Staff is recommending that the proposed plan which was presented to the community at the 29 November 2023 Public Consultation Meeting be recommended for approval.

The plan results in a set of recommendations which cover all of the study's key objectives. The working group process was collegial and constructive in providing local input regarding options.

The proposed plan was well-received by most in attendance at the Public Consultation Meeting, as well as those who have provided feedback. All recommendations would come into effect upon opening of the New Findlay Creek Elementary School in September 2024.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. The cost of conducting the study has been managed within existing departmental budgets.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

9. As per the approved timeline, a working group for the study was formed in September 2023. Over the course of the fall, the working group met both in person and through email communication. The group was comprised of council representatives and Principals from impacted schools, and Board staff. Representatives from various local community associations, as well as Trustees, were also invited to attend.

As noted previously, on 29 November 2023, a Public Consultation Meeting was held in the gymnasium of Vimy Ridge Public School in order to receive parent and community feedback on a proposed plan which was prepared during the working group process.

Notice of the Public Consultation Meeting was provided via the following:

- Communication through school councils;
- E-mail blast, or school newsletter/website to parents and guardians of students attending impacted schools (translation was made available in Arabic and Somali);
- A posting on the study webpage located on the Board website; and
- General District social media notifications.

Approximately 40 members of the public attended the meeting at Vimy Ridge Public School. An Information Package was provided to those in attendance that evening. Additional copies were left at Vimy Ridge Public School, and a digital version of the package was also posted to the study webpage.

A staff presentation at the meeting was followed by a formal public question, answer, and comment period. The presentation provided an overview of the study process, key objectives, and details regarding the proposed plan.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

10. The opening of a new elementary school within the developing Findlay Creek community will serve to provide students with improved access to learning environments and optimize the use of District resources. This is consistent with stewardship objectives of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. THAT the opening grade structure, program offering and attendance boundary for the New Findlay Creek Elementary School be approved according to Appendix E to Report No. 24-004.
- B. THAT the revised attendance boundary for Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 for Vimy Ridge Public School be approved according to Appendix F to Report No. 24-004, to be implemented upon the opening of the New Findlay Creek Elementary School.
- C. THAT the Grade 7 and 8 attendance boundary for Vimy Ridge Public School be approved as per Appendix G to Report No. 24-004.
- D. THAT all current Junior Kindergarten to Grade 5 students that have been directed to Robert Bateman Public School as a result of the interim measures outlined in Report No. 22-037 be redirected to their home school upon opening of the New Findlay Creek Elementary School.
- E. THAT current Grade 7 students attending Roberta Bondar Public School, as a result of the interim measures outlined in Report No. 22-037, be given a one-time option to remain at Roberta Bondar Public School or attend Vimy Ridge Public School upon the opening of the New Findlay Creek Elementary School.

Randall Gerrior
Associate Director, Business Operations
(ext. 8881)

Pino Buffone
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

- Appendix A General Location Map – Study Area
- Appendix B School Attendance Boundary Map – Vimy Ridge Public School
- Appendix C Study Consultation Plan
- Appendix D Study Timeline
- Appendix E Recommended Attendance Boundary – New Findlay Creek Elementary School
- Appendix F Recommended Attendance Boundary – Vimy Ridge Public School – Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6
- Appendix G Recommended Attendance Boundary – Vimy Ridge Public School – Grades 7 and 8
- Appendix H Current Enrolment and Accommodation Chart