

# **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to establish the catchment area for a new primary school at Bilston and amend the catchment areas of Loanhead, Paradykes and Roslin Primary Schools.**

## **1. Introduction**

This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Midlothian Council's proposal to establish the catchment area for a new primary school at Bilston and amend the catchment areas of Loanhead, Paradykes and Roslin Primary Schools. 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 a copy of 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

### **1.1 HM Inspectors considered:**

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools affected; 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.

### **1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:**

- attendance at the public meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2015 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

- visits to the sites of Loanhead, Paradykes and Roslin Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Midlothian Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The consultation period ran for six weeks, from 14 September until 3 November 2015. The council held two public meetings during this period. No one attended the meeting at Roslin Primary School and three parents attended the meeting at Loanhead Primary School. The council undertook discussions with the staff and pupils of all three schools affected by the proposal. The council also consulted the Parent Councils of all three schools affected by the proposal and the parents of pupils at the three schools. It further consulted the Community Councils of Damhead and district, Roslin and Bilston and Loanhead and district. The council received 14 responses as a result of its consultation. Ten of these were in favour.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The proposal is of potential educational benefit. In adjusting the schools' catchment areas, travelling distances to and from school will be minimised for the majority of children, with the likelihood that more children will choose to walk to school. Beyond supporting their health and wellbeing, this should also allow for easier access for a greater number of children to attend afterschool activities. This has the potential to support the development of children's social skills, confidence, team working and wider talents. The provision of modern flexible learning spaces, inside and outdoors, will be better suited to support the delivery of the key entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence. Local communities will benefit from an increased number of school places. This includes the community of Bilston, where children will have the opportunity to complete their early and primary school education on one site. In addition, the community will enjoy access to a much improved community facility. The relocation and replacement of the current Paradykes Primary School with a larger building, will ensure additional capacity which will be required to meet increasing demand for school places resulting from recent and proposed new house building.

3.2 Most stakeholders who responded to the consultation were in favour of the proposal. They recognised that in establishing a new local school for the Bilston community, it made sense for the council to alter the corresponding school catchment areas. A few parents had a number of reasonable concerns. These included the need to manage traffic congestion and ensure safe walking routes to school. A small number of parents wanted more detail to understand the projected capacity of the planned new school at Bilston. Parents and children from the Bilston area were not clear whether transport would continue to be provided for those children already enrolled at Roslin Primary School and who wanted to finish their

primary years education in the same school. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to address these concerns.

3.3 Children were mainly concerned about whether there would be adequate parking at the new location of Paradykes Primary School and whether the outdoor pitches would be large enough. They looked forward to having a separate space for physical education which no longer doubled up as a dining hall. They were a little anxious about crossing a busy road to get to the new school when currently there is no crossing patrol attendant. Children at Roslin Primary School were concerned about the loss of playground space and access to some of the facilities during the construction of the new school. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to address these concerns.

3.4 Staff at Roslin Primary School welcomed the proposals but were anxious to know where they would be placed in August 2016. Staff at Paradykes Primary School were looking forward to new facilities, particularly the opportunity to have a much needed performance space, and additional spaces for physical education. They considered it beneficial to have links to both the community library and the leisure centre on the new site in the hope of offering more regular and varied opportunities to children to participate.

#### **4. Summary**

The proposal has the potential to be of educational benefit to children and the local communities served by the schools affected. The benefits will derive largely from the enhanced facilities and the corresponding additional capacity. The proposal has the support of the majority of stakeholders. In taking forward the proposal and finalising its report, the council should look to provide further detail in relation to the reasonable points raised by the small number of parents who responded to the consultation. It should address concerns related to safe routes to school, traffic management and the provision of crossing patrol attendants.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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