

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the following four Proposals by Midlothian Council:**

**Proposal 1: To establish the catchment area of the new primary school at Whitehouse Way, Gorebridge.**

**Proposal 2: Make consequent adjustments to the catchment areas of Gorebridge and Stobhill Primary Schools.**

**Proposal 3: Transfer the areas of housing development which lie to the east of the dismantled railway from the catchment of Newtongrange Primary School to that of Mayfield Primary School.**

**Proposal 4: Relocate Newbattle High School to the replacement school site at Mayfield Road, Easthouses.**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 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 four proposals as above. 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 proposals, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposals. 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 proposals, it has reviewed the initial proposals, 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.

### 1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposals for children and young people of Gorebridge, Stobhill, Newtongrange and Mayfield Primary Schools and Newbattle High School; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal papers; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposals;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposals; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposals, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held at Gorebridge Primary School on 15 September 2015 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposals, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;
- visits to the site of Gorebridge, Stobhill, Newtongrange and Mayfield Primary Schools and Newbattle High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 26 August 2015 until 8 October 2015. During this period the council produced a further paper outlining more detail on the educational benefits of the four proposals. The proposal paper was made available in paper format at all affected schools and in local libraries. It was also posted on the council's website. Public meetings were held on 15 and 16 September 2015 with a total of sixteen members of the public in attendance. The council received 11 responses to an online survey and two written responses. Of these submissions, the majority were in favour of Proposals 1, 2 and 4. Three of the 11 respondents were not in favour of Proposal 3. Concerns raised related to Mayfield Primary School being over capacity, travel distance and possible impact on facilities shared with St Luke's Primary School. The council took appropriate steps to consult with children and young people. Children and young people were overall supportive of the four proposals.

2.3 The council received a written submission from the Midlothian branch of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS). The EIS welcomed the building of a new primary school at North Gorebridge and the planned replacement for Newbattle High School. However, it was not supportive of Proposal 3 on the basis that increasing occupancy at Mayfield Primary School may have a detrimental impact on St Luke's Primary School with which it shares facilities.

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

3.1 The council has set out a reasonable case for the proposed catchment area for the new North Gorebridge Primary School and the proposed changes to the catchment areas of Gorebridge, Stobhill, Newtongrange and Mayfield Primary Schools. In arriving at its proposal it gave good consideration to the significant housing developments underway in the Gorebridge area and to ensure sufficient capacity for all Gorebridge children who wish to attend their local school. It also gave good consideration to current and planned occupancy at Newtongrange

Primary School and Mayfield Primary School to make best use of available capacity. Proposals 1, 2 and 3 will help the council secure best value by addressing capacity issues in its school estate.

3.2 The council has set out a reasonable case for relocating Newbattle High School to the replacement school site. The replacement school will offer enhanced learning and recreational facilities and opportunities which will benefit both young people and the local community. Proposal 4 will help the council secure best value by addressing capacity issues in its school estate and by replacing a building whose current condition is rated as 'Condition D' with modern, purpose-built, sustainable accommodation and a rich digital learning environment.

3.3 Children from Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of Proposals 1 and 2. They recognised the need for an additional primary school in Gorebridge to accommodate the increased numbers of children which new housing developments would bring. The new primary school and catchment area adjustments would alleviate pressure on their existing schools in terms of pupil numbers and demands on space. They also recognised that children in the new housing developments would have less distance to travel and could walk to school.

3.4 Children from Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School are in support of Proposal 4. They believe that the current Newbattle High School needs replacing. They are excited about having access to a new and accessible 21<sup>st</sup> Century secondary school which offers up-to-date learning and recreational facilities. As young people currently receive transport to Newbattle High School they see no difficulties regarding travel to and from the new school.

3.5 Teaching and support staff from both Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School are supportive of Proposals 1 and 2. They recognise the need for an additional primary school locally to accommodate the demand generated by the new housing developments. The number of children affected by the proposed catchment changes in both Gorebridge and Stobhill Primary Schools is minimal. Proposals 1 and 2 would relieve pressure on Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School and improve opportunities for all children locally. Whilst the new school offered improved opportunities for children in the new housing developments, some slight concern was expressed about how parents from further afield might get their children to and from the new primary school.

3.6 Teaching and support staff from Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School support Proposal 4 to relocate Newbattle High School to a replacement site at Mayfield Road, Easthouses. They recognise the clear educational benefits which replacing the existing Newbattle High School with a modern, fit for purpose, well-resourced learning campus would bring. However, concerns were expressed about the capacity of the new building to fully accommodate children from all the Newbattle Associated School Group cluster primaries if the population continues to increase.

3.7 A very small number of parents from Gorebridge Primary School met with HM Inspectors. They were supportive of Proposals 1 and 2. They recognised the need for an additional primary school to accommodate increased demand. Parents who live in the new catchment area and who already have children at Gorebridge Primary School or Stobhill Primary School would benefit from further reassurance from the council that they are not required to move their children to the new primary school. Further clarification regarding the position of siblings being able to attend Gorebridge Primary School and Stobhill Primary School would also be beneficial. Parents support Proposal 4 and recognise the benefits and opportunities a modern secondary facility would offer.

3.8 Midlothian Council's Proposal 3 to adjust the Newtongrange Primary School and Mayfield Primary School catchment areas will address the anticipated over capacity issues within Newtongrange Primary School which may arise from the planned housing development on Lingerwood and East Newtongrange development sites.

3.9 Proposal 3 should help ensure that children living in the new housing developments are able to attend primary school with their peers from their new community. It will allow children from both Newtongrange and Mayfield Primary Schools to continue to benefit from the quality of nurturing learning experiences which children, families and staff believe both schools provide.

3.10 Parents of children at Newtongrange Primary School, who met with HM Inspectors, were satisfied overall with Proposal 3. However, they expressed concern about proposed future changes to the school catchment area. They would value further discussion with Midlothian Council about the negative impact which they feel the future re-zoning of land, indicated in this proposal at Redheugh/Prestonholm, will have on their community. Pupils and staff at Newtongrange Primary School are happy with the proposal.

3.11 Staff at Mayfield Primary School who met with HM Inspectors, expressed some concern about the projected increase in size of their school roll as a result of Proposal 3. Should the proposal go ahead, they would like to work with Midlothian Council to ensure they can maintain sufficient levels of pupil support. In addition, they feel the dining space, which is shared with St Luke's Primary School, is insufficient for increased pupil numbers. Children from Mayfield Primary School are happy with the proposal overall.

3.12 Staff, parents and young people from Newbattle High School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of Proposal 4 to relocate Newbattle High School to the replacement site at Mayfield Road, Easthouses. They could clearly articulate the benefits the replacement high school would offer and looked forward to having access to a modern 'fit for purpose' facility. The location of the new school meant minimal disruption for young people getting to and from the school. Public access to enhanced facilities will have a positive impact on the local community. Young people were particularly enthusiastic about the replacement school giving a positive impression to outsiders and in encouraging a strong sense of civic pride. They also thought the improved sports facilities would encourage more young people and adults to be physically active.

#### **4. Summary**

The council's proposals are of educational benefit in the long term. They allow for children to attend their local catchment school whilst accommodating the increased numbers of children moving into the local area. The majority of stakeholders support the proposals. Proposals 1, 2 and 3 will help the council secure best value by addressing capacity issues in its school estate locally. In its final consultation report, the council needs to provide reassurance to parents living in the new catchment area who already have children at Gorebridge or Stobhill Primary Schools and also have younger children about future school choices. The council should also provide reassurance to the staff at Mayfield Primary School regarding levels of pupil support and work with them to ensure sufficiency of dining space to enable a high quality lunchtime experience for pupils within the shared campus. In its final consultation report, the council needs to give some indication about how it plans to work with the Newtongrange School Community to address any concerns over changes to catchment areas resulting from this proposal.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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