

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission arrangements as a result of alteration to the non-denominational primary school catchment areas of Parkhead Primary School and Meldrum Primary School.

April 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of West Lothian Council's proposal to review admission arrangements as a result of alteration to the non-denominational primary school catchment areas of Parkhead Primary School and Meldrum Primary School. 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 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the schools; 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 21 March 2023 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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 site of Meldrum Primary School and Parkhead Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 West Lothian Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council ran a public consultation from 30 January to 24 March 2023. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders online and in paper format and communication of the proposal was placed on the council website and in local media. A public meeting was held on 21 March 2023. No stakeholders attended the public meeting and the council did not receive any written responses to its consultation. Given the proposal does not affect any children currently attending school the lack of engagement was not unexpected by the council.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The proposal covers a change in catchment areas for a planned housing development in the Gavieside area. Currently there are no children or young people attending schools or early learning and childcare settings in West Lothian in that area. Alongside this proposal, another proposal was undertaken covering secondary school provision in the Gavieside area. If the secondary school proposal is agreed alongside this one, then children in the Gavieside area will attend Meldrum Primary School and then move to Deans Community High School. HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to ensuring all the children who attend a primary school are zoned to attend the same secondary school. This can help with transition arrangements and continuity of learning in regard to a shared curriculum between primary and secondary education.

3.2 The council states that this proposal will help to reduce potential pressure on Parkhead Primary School whose roll will be affected by housing developments in other local areas. Stakeholders at Parkhead Primary School that spoke to HM Inspectors are concerned about the pressure their school is under from a rising roll. They raised a potential issue in relation to accommodating placing requests if the school roll rises further. A few stakeholders raised queries as to when the new primary school will be developed and what pressure existing schools may experience prior to this as families move into the development. They also queried whether an additional secondary school may be required at some point. HM Inspectors agree that it is important for school rolls to be managed to help ensure they do not exceed capacity. It will be important for the council to continue to monitor school rolls and capacity.

3.3 Stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors are supportive of the proposal. Senior school staff agree that given the rising school roll at Parkhead Primary School, and that Meldrum Primary School has capacity, that it is sensible to alter the catchment areas in regard to Gavieside. The council states that the proposal will have no current impact on traffic and that they anticipate providing school transport for children from the Gavieside development. However, a few stakeholders stated that there are existing issues with traffic around the schools. A few stakeholders from Meldrum Primary School are concerned about the potential for increased traffic due to school transport buses and more parents dropping children off. It will be important for the council to continue to work with stakeholders to address any traffic concerns and ensure safe routes to school as families move to the Gavieside development over the next few years.

3.4 Children from Meldrum Primary School and Parkhead Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are generally supportive of the proposal. Children at Meldrum Primary School recognise that having increasing numbers of children at their school provides more potential friendships and play opportunities. A few children were concerned about the distance new pupils would have to travel and the traffic around the school. Children at Parkhead Primary School think that as the new housing gets built a new school would be a good idea. They asked if it would have a breakfast club.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are potential educational benefits to this proposal. It may help in managing schools rolls in Parkhead Primary School which is affected by other local housing developments across the area. In addition, if the secondary school proposal is agreed alongside this proposal then children of families who move to the Gavieside development will transition to the same secondary school as their peers. It will be important for the council to continue to monitor school rolls as families move into the Gavieside and other local developments. They will also need

to work with stakeholders to ensure effective traffic management around the schools. This will particularly be the case in regard to additional school buses travelling to Meldrum Primary School as the Gavieside development is built.

HM Inspectors
April 2023