

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to establish a new primary school and its associated catchment area within the land at Easthouses and to realign the catchment areas of Dalkeith High School, Newbattle High School and Lasswade High School.

May 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 Midlothian Council's proposal to establish a new primary school and its associated catchment area within the land at Easthouses and to realign the catchment areas of Dalkeith High School, Newbattle High School and Lasswade High 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 and young people 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 29 March 2023 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 Kings Park, Lawfield, Mayfield, Newtongrange, Woodburn and Bonnyrigg Primary Schools and Newbattle, Dalkeith and Lasswade High 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](#).

2.2 The consultation ran from 27 February until 23 April 2023. Papers for the consultation were available via the council's website and at a variety of public offices. A public meeting was held in Newbattle High School on 29 March 2023. It was attended by nine members of the public and a few members of staff from Midlothian Council. Members of the public were encouraged to respond to the consultation by email, either to the address given on the council website or directly to the Head of Education. Following the public meeting the council sent out further information regarding transition to secondary schools, along with a reminder about the closing date for responses.

Following this they received correspondence from the Chair of Bonnyrigg Primary School Parent Council. They requested clarification regarding the housing in their area that would be impacted by the proposed changes as they suggested that this was not clear. The council responded quickly to address the misunderstanding by sending out a response to detail the affected properties and received no further questions. Two hundred and twenty-five returns were received by the council in response to the consultation and almost all were in favour of the proposal. Many responders recognise the benefits of a new school in Easthouses which will provide a range of facilities benefitting the local community.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits the council sets out in its proposal. Almost all stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors recognise the educational benefits of a new primary school with provision for additional support needs and early years and childcare provision. A few parents and staff felt that it was important to maintain the identity of communities and so are supportive, in principle, of children attending their local school. A few primary school children who met with HM Inspectors agreed that a new school offered good opportunities for learning and making new friends. A few secondary school staff agreed that the proposed catchment changes should assist in alleviating pupil roll numbers in those schools that are nearing capacity. A few stakeholders thought that the council's commitment to allow siblings to continue to attend the same school is important. Several stakeholders raised concerns about potential increase in traffic around the new Easthouses Primary School and the importance of safe routes to school.

3.2 The proposed catchment changes impact on a few houses in the Cockpen area of Newtongrange. A few parents are concerned about the potential negative impact on their children such as losing well established friendship groups. They noted that the children from the Cockpen area who have confirmed places in August 2023 or younger children at Bonnyrigg Primary School will require placing requests in future to transition to Lasswade High School. These parents suggest that the proposed catchment changes are too soon and do not allow families to make informed choices. They are concerned that should placing requests for a primary or secondary school not be approved, children and young people would not transition to secondary school with their peers or friendship groups. HM Inspectors suggest that the council should discuss the impact of the proposals with parents to allay their concerns.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal to establish a new primary school at Easthouses will bring clear educational benefits for the children attending. The inclusion of an additional early years and additional support needs provision is also welcomed. However, a few parents in the Cockpen area of Newtongrange have ongoing worries regarding the impact of the proposal. Should the proposal go ahead, the council needs to engage with those parents to find ways to address their concerns.

HM Inspectors
May 2023