

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission catchment arrangements at Linlithgow primary schools.**

November 2022

## 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 catchment arrangements at Linlithgow 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 2010 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 Linlithgow and Bathgate areas;
- 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 4 October 2022 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 site of Linlithgow, Linlithgow Bridge, Springfield, Low Port and Boghall Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation process ran from 22 August until 7 October 2022. The proposal paper was made available on the council's website. Stakeholders, including Parent Councils, parents and staff, were provided with paper and electronic copies. A public meeting was held on 4 October 2022. It was attended by four people, one of whom also sent in an email submission. Attendees' main questions were in regard to the communication and timing of the proposal, and placing requests for children not yet of school age. All attendees expressed support for the proposal. Children in the five primary schools affected by the proposal were consulted, with written submissions from two pupil councils. Children were largely in agreement with the proposal.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree with the council's educational benefits statement. Children currently attending the five schools affected by the proposed changes to catchment areas will continue to go to their existing school. The proposal does not affect the secondary school that children in the five schools will attend. The proposal has no implications for transition arrangements from primary to secondary school. In any schools where rolls increase due to the proposal, there may be a need to adjust how space is used. However, all five headteachers were clear that this will not have any detrimental effect on their capacity to deliver a wide range of educational opportunities.

3.2 The staff and parents that spoke to HM Inspectors in the five schools consider that the proposal is practical. They are clear that the proposal will enable more children to attend their nearest school and help to balance school rolls to better match capacity. The projected school rolls under the proposal should continue to allow for placing requests from parents from out with individual school catchment areas. A few parents expressed concerns about potential rapid increases in school rolls if several, potential housing developments are undertaken across the area. However, they recognise this is a longer term issue and out with the scope of this proposal.

3.3 Children who spoke with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed changes to primary school catchment areas. Those in the schools where rolls may increase look forward to making more friends. The proposal will reduce travel distances from home to school for some families. Children think this is good for the environment and that it may reduce fuel costs for families. A few children from Springfield Primary School are concerned about whether all children have a safe route to walk to school. This is in relation to the limited crossings and school crossing patrols on busy roads in the area.

3.4 Staff from two of the schools expressed concern over the potential increase in school traffic that the proposal could create. In both cases, they are developing further their work to provide safe walking routes, walking buses and alternatives to school gate drop-offs. However, if the proposal is approved then it will be important that the council continues to work with school staff and Parent Councils to review travel and traffic arrangements.

### 4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits from the proposal. The changes in catchment will enable more children to go to their nearest school. The proposal will also help to balance school rolls and school capacity. Staff, parents and children are content with the proposal. If the proposal is approved, there may be a need to consider further travel and traffic arrangements.

**HM Inspectors  
November 2022**