

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to vary the Admissions Arrangements to Primary and Secondary Education.**

June 2025

## 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 a proposal by Midlothian Council to vary the Admissions Arrangements to Primary and Secondary Education. 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

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 meetings held on 22 and 24 April, 12, 15 and 22 May 2025 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;
- visits to the site of Danderhall Primary School, Paradykes Primary School, St David's Roman Catholic (RC) High School, Sacred Heart Primary School, Hawthornden Primary School, Roslin Primary School, Dalkeith High School, Newtongrange Primary School, St Andrew's RC Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- meeting with representatives of the Catholic Church and officers from East Lothian and Midlothian Councils.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The public consultation ran from 2 April to 2 June 2025. The proposal was available on the council website and made available to stakeholders. The council held five public meetings and four virtual drop-in sessions. There were a total of 66 attendances at the public meetings. The council received 511 responses to their online consultation survey. They also received

three emails, a response from the pastoral team and letters from St David's RC High School Parent Council and Loretto RC Primary School Parent Partnership. Most of the 511 survey responses were from parents and carers. The majority of respondents disagree with the proposal. Of those that expressed a view, 237 strongly disagree, 49 disagree, 87 agree and 111 strongly agree. In the public meetings, letters and survey results stakeholders raised a variety of points and queries. Comments supporting the proposal include agreement with prioritising children and young people living in school catchment areas, and/or those living in Midlothian. The suggestion that a clearer admissions policy may better support sustainable school planning. Concerns raised by stakeholders, include worries about ending the long-established link between St David's RC High School, Midlothian and Loretto RC Primary School, East Lothian and future risks to continuing catholic education for some children. Stakeholders also raised queries around siblings being able to attend the same school in future. A few stakeholders asked how this proposal might affect or relate to wider changes to the school estate.

2.3 The council consulted with children and young people potentially affected by this proposal through digital Pupil Voice sessions. This involved online sessions in 16 schools, including Loretto RC Primary School in East Lothian. Overall, the majority stated that they think the proposed changes are reasonable, although a minority are unsure or disagreed. Children and young people from several schools commented on their preference to let siblings go to the same school for relationship and practical reasons. Children and young people at denominational schools raised the largest number of concerns. They are worried about how this proposal may reduce opportunities for some children and young people to access faith-based education, particularly if they are not near a denominational school, are not a baptised Roman Catholic or live outwith Midlothian.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree that it is important that local authorities plan ahead in order to ensure school places reflect the number of children and young people in their local council area. The school population in Midlothian, and in several surrounding local council areas, is increasing. It is therefore appropriate for Midlothian Council to consider how it can best manage this change. HM Inspectors agree that there are clear educational benefits to schools having sufficient and appropriate space for delivering educational experiences.

3.2 The majority of stakeholders that spoke to HM Inspectors, who live in Midlothian, support the proposal. They see the growing population due to increasing numbers of new housing developments and consider it appropriate that Midlothian Council prioritises children and young people within its borders. They would welcome a clear admissions policy that takes the changes in communities into account. They hope that this will minimise any anxiety for families about what schools children and young people will go to. However, parents that spoke to HM Inspectors who live outwith Midlothian, have concerns about how the proposal may affect their choice of school.

3.3 Almost all children and young people that spoke to HM Inspectors, expressed the view that they should be entitled to go to their nearest school. A minority thought this should be the case even where the nearest school is across a council border. Children that spoke to HM Inspectors, consider being able to sustain friendships by going to the same secondary school as their school peers to be very important.

3.4 Almost all parents, young people and children who spoke to HM Inspectors think that children should be entitled to attend the same school as their older siblings. A minority queried whether this is given a sufficiently high priority in the proposal paper. Most children and young people that spoke to HM Inspectors consider this the second most important criteria, after locality, for admissions priorities. Stakeholders would like the council to ensure that siblings are not

separated as a result of implementation of the proposal, including those who are out of catchment. However, a few stakeholders also noted that children without older siblings shouldn't be penalised when it comes to allocating places. HM Inspectors recommend that the council consider further any potential negative impact of this proposal in regard to supporting sibling attendance at the same schools.

3.5 HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits in an admissions policy that supports well planned, communicated and delivered transition from primary school to secondary school. This should include enhanced transition for children with additional support needs. Transitions for children subject to placing requests, often starts later. Stakeholders would value the clarity of an admissions policy that would allow them to begin transition work at an early stage. This year, a few children have experienced interrupted transition due to uncertainty of which secondary school they would be allocated. This created anxiety for the children and their families. Staff who met with HM Inspectors are hopeful that, when implemented, the proposal will help them to start transition programmes earlier and avoid such situations in the future. HM Inspectors agree it is important effective transition is in place for all children, including those whose families are submitting placing requests. These families may wish children to attend transition activities at more than one school. The council should work with schools to support families putting in placing requests, to consider what transition activities outwith their catchment school children should attend, given they may not receive a place at their preferred school.

3.6 All stakeholders at denominational schools who spoke to HM Inspectors, want children and young people who are baptised Roman Catholic to be able to access faith-based education at primary school and secondary school. There are, however, a variety of views on the order within the proposal. A minority think that children living in Midlothian should have priority, regardless of their faith. Others disagree, and consider those who are baptised Roman Catholic children, even if living outside Midlothian, should have priority. Stakeholders at St David's RC High School are concerned that the proposal could result in an increase in non-Roman Catholic children attending the school. They feel this could impact on the catholic ethos of the school.

3.7 Currently, around 120 young people at St Davids RC High School are from the East Lothian's Loretto RC Primary School catchment area. Most stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors from St Davids RC High School and Loretto RC Primary School, disagree with and are very concerned about this proposal. They are worried that this proposal will remove certainty about children being able to continue their education onto a denomination secondary school. Their preference is for Loretto RC Primary School to be a catchment primary of St David's RC High School, with the children prioritised for places alongside those living in Midlothian.

3.7 Young people at St Davids RC High School who spoke to HM Inspectors, who travel from East Lothian, are concerned about whether their current school transport will continue. East Lothian Council have confirmed transport will be provided for the coming year. If this proposal is agreed, it will be important for East Lothian and Midlothian Councils to work together to consider any travel implications this could create for young people and their families.

3.8 As this proposal includes denominational schools, HM Inspectors consulted representatives of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. The archdiocese is concerned that this proposal will reduce the opportunity for children attending Loretto RC Primary School to access secondary education at a denominational school. The archdiocese considers children in Loretto RC Primary School to be part of the wider St David's RC High School community. The archdiocese believes that this proposal would impact adversely on these children's faith journey. If the proposal is agreed, HM Inspectors recommend the two councils work with stakeholders at Loretto RC Primary School to consider how best to reduce disruption to children's transition to secondary school.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits in Midlothian Council having an admissions policy that will best manage the change in their school population. Many stakeholders that spoke to HM Inspectors recognise the challenging situation in Midlothian of rising school rolls at many of their schools. Should this proposal be agreed, it will be important for Midlothian Council to work with schools to support cohesive and effective transitions for all children. Stakeholders raised the need for Midlothian Council to enable younger siblings to attend the same school as their siblings. They would like this to be considered further by the council if they decide to change their admissions policy. HM Inspectors recommend the council further explore with stakeholders how to reduce any negative impact of this proposal in regard to siblings.

Families who live outwith Midlothian, but whose children and young people attend Midlothian schools, are worried by the proposal. In particular, there is a long history of children who attend Loretto RC Primary School in East Lothian being able to transition to St David's RC High School in Midlothian for secondary education. Both the affected families and representatives of the Catholic Church are concerned that this proposal, if agreed, will potentially remove these children's access to denominational education once they reach the secondary stage of education. If the proposal is agreed, it will be important for the two councils to work together to minimise disruption to these children's learning journeys.

**HM Inspectors**  
**June 2025**