

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at West Calder High School and Deans Community High 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 arising from school catchment area variations at West Calder High School and Deans Community 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 21 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 site of Deans Community High School and West Calder High 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 or young people currently attending school this 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 in West Lothian from that area. Alongside this proposal, another proposal was undertaken covering primary school provision for the Gavieside area. If the primary school proposal is agreed then children in the Gavieside area will attend Meldrum Primary School. This proposal would enable all these children to then attend Deans Community High School as they move to secondary school. HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to ensuring all the children who attend a primary school are zoned to attend the same secondary. This can help with transition arrangements and continuity of learning in regard to a shared curriculum between primary and secondary.

3.2 The council states that this proposal will help to reduce potential pressure on West Calder High School, whose roll will be affected by other housing developments in the area. HM Inspectors agree that it is important for school rolls to be managed to help ensure they do not exceed capacity. The council states that the proposal will have no current impact on traffic and that they anticipate providing school transport for young people from the Gavieside development. It will be important for the council to continue to monitor school rolls and capacity, traffic and safe routes to school as families move to the Gavieside and other local housing developments over the next few years.

3.3 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were positive about this proposal. Senior school leaders and young people at both schools are clear that as West Calder High School already has capacity issues it is sensible to move the Gavieside area to the Deans Community High School catchment. In addition, senior school staff at Deans Community High School are clear their school has capacity and that the proposal may help address a reducing school roll. Young people raised aspects that will need considered as families start to move into the housing development. They are concerned that young people living in the new houses may not have the same opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities as their peers due to transport limitations. They also thought that there might be an impact on building friendships and social relationships for those living further away from Deans Community High School. Young people at Deans Community High School are positive about welcoming young people from Gavieside to their school.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are potential educational benefits to this proposal. If this proposal is agreed alongside the primary school proposal, then all children in the Gavieside area will transition from Meldrum Primary School to Deans Community High School. HM Inspectors recognise the benefits when children transition to the same secondary school as their peers. The proposal, if agreed, may also help in managing the school roll at West Calder High School which is affected by other local housing developments across the area. It will be important for the council to continue to monitor school rolls as families move into the Gavieside and other local developments.

HM Inspectors
April 2023