

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to relocate Beeslack Community High School and realignment of the associated primary catchment areas as well as the secondary catchment areas of Penicuik and Lasswade High Schools.

April 2024

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 relocate Beeslack Community High School and realignment of the associated primary catchment areas as well as the secondary catchment areas of Penicuik and Lasswade High 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' 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 and young people 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 20 and 25 March 2024 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 Beeslack Community High School, Lasswade High School and Roslin, Paradykes, Loanhead, Mauricewood and Saltersgate 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 council undertook the consultation from 19 February to 16 April 2024. The council published the proposal paper on their website. Paper and electronic copies of the proposal paper were made available to stakeholders. Midlothian Council held a public meeting at Beeslack Community High School and Lasswade High School, which 25 stakeholders attended.

2.3 The council received 388 responses to their online consultation and three written responses, the majority of which were from parents. Of these, the majority are in favour of the proposal to relocate Beeslack Community High School to the land adjacent to Easter Bush. The majority are also in favour of realigning Beeslack Community High Schools catchment areas to include Loanhead and Paradykes Primary Schools. In relation to realigning the catchment areas of the former Glencorse Primary School and Mauricewood Primary School from Beeslack Community High School to Penicuik High School, 32% agreed, 30% of respondents disagreed and 38% of respondents had no opinion on the proposal. The majority of respondents who gave an opinion on the proposal to realign the catchment area of the former Glencorse Primary to Mauricewood Primary support the proposal. The majority of respondents support the proposal to establish a new additional support needs (ASN) stage at Beeslack Community High School and Penicuik High School. A few stakeholders expressed concerns over the lack of safe, active travel routes, limited public transport, increased congestion and increased travel time to the school. A few parents highlighted the need to consider the potential impact due to any delays to the build phase of the project. They also noted concerns about the future capacity of Roslin Primary School and the lack of local amenities at the new site of Easter Bush.

2.4 The council facilitated consultation sessions with children and young people from all of the schools affected by this proposal. Most children and young people are supportive of the proposal to replace Beeslack Community High School. All support the need to establish space for pupils with ASN in Beeslack Community High School and Penicuik High School. Most children and young people are supportive of the proposal to realign the catchment of the former Glencorse Primary School. A few children and young people have worries about friends going to different schools and the impact the proposal may have on families transporting their children to school.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council's proposal sets out a number of educational benefits for those directly affected. Local authority projections indicate growing school rolls and that the current secondary school estate will not be able to accommodate this increase. All stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors were positive about the proposed replacement Beeslack Community High School and realignment of the associated primary and secondary school catchment areas. HM Inspectors agree that the proposed catchment changes and a new school building will help to address current and future capacity issues across the school estate. HM Inspectors also agree that building a new school should improve the learning environment. Children, young people and staff will benefit from a modern school building that has potential to enhance learning and teaching experiences with improved access to digital resources. The new building and grounds should provide more flexibility for outdoor learning and multiuse community areas. If the relocation is agreed, the new facilities should help to strengthen the school's partnership with Edinburgh University in developing a centre of excellence for science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM). HM Inspectors suggest the council work with stakeholders to provide more information on how young people across Midlothian will benefit from the STEAM centre of excellence and the partnership with the proposed veterinary school.

3.2 The proposed new stage of ASN will include a specialist complex needs provision and a separate provision for children and young people with severe and complex medical needs. The stage of ASN will have a capacity of 40 learners across five classrooms. Should the proposal be approved, there is potential for children and young people to benefit from a purpose-built provision designed to meet their severe and complex medical needs. They will have access to educational and other facilities, such as sensory and life skills equipment. There is also increased opportunities for ASN learners to access mainstream classes with no additional travel. All stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors were positive about the facility for learners with complex needs being included in the new school campus. HM Inspectors agree that this is an educational

benefit. HM Inspectors suggest that the council continue to work with schools to ensure that there is a shared understanding of ASN placement criteria.

3.3 A few stakeholders, that spoke to HM Inspectors, had some questions and concerns. Stakeholders raised the need to improve safe active travel routes to school. They would like more information on how the council intend to ensure effective traffic management and parking at the new school. Stakeholders would also appreciate the council providing more information on what school transport arrangements will be put in place if this proposal is agreed. Stakeholders also raised queries about how transitions to the new school will be managed, the availability of community learning opportunities and whether the Glencorse ASN provision will remain. HM Inspectors recommend that the council work with stakeholders to address these concerns. HM Inspectors suggest that there are benefits to the council working with stakeholders during the design phase. This includes those stakeholders who work with learners who have ASN. Such engagement will help to ensure spaces in the proposed new school best reflect the needs of learners.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that this proposal has clear educational benefits. The proposed catchment changes and a new school building will help to address current and future capacity issues across the school estate. The majority of stakeholders are supportive of the proposals to relocate Beeslack Community High School and establishing new ASN stages at Beeslack Community High School and Penicuik High School. There are varied views in regard to rezoning of the school catchments. Should the proposal be agreed, there will be a need to continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure that their questions and concerns are considered and addressed. This should include, providing reassurance to parents around safe routes to school. During the design phase for the new school building, the council should continue to ensure that the ASN facility takes appropriate account of the requirements of learners with severe and complex medical needs.

HM Inspectors
April 2024