

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at Boghall Primary School and Simpson Primary School.**

May 2021

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her 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 Boghall Primary School and Simpson Primary 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 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 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 11 March 2021 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
- virtual visits to the sites of Simpson Primary School and Boghall Primary School, 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 18 February to 2 April 2021. An online meeting was held on 11 March 2021 which was attended by two members of the public and two stakeholders. All were in favour of the proposal. The council received three responses by email. Responses included representation from the Pupil Councils at both Simpson and Boghall Primary Schools. The majority of these responses were in favour of the proposal. The Parent Council from Simpson Primary School also submitted the results of their consultation on the proposal, which was in favour of the proposal.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Simpson Primary School has capacity for 640 children and a current roll of 636. Boghall Primary School has capacity for 462 children and a current roll of 275. Projections are for Simpson Primary School to have an increasing roll and Boghall Primary School to have a decreasing roll in 2022. The Guildiehaugh Depot site, within current catchment for Simpson Primary School, is proposed for redevelopment as housing, with 100 residential properties. This development could place a significant strain on the roll at Simpson Primary School. West Lothian Council are, therefore, seeking a viable solution in the variation of catchment area of both schools to accommodate children from the new development.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree with the council's educational benefits statement and are confident that there is sufficient merit to review admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at Boghall Primary School and Simpson Primary School. The council's proposal provides a feasible solution to reduce any additional pressure on Simpson Primary School caused by the new housing. It will provide a better balance between pupil numbers in each of the school communities. This will allow both schools to continue to deliver the breadth of Curriculum for Excellence without undue pressure caused by increasing pupil rolls.

3.3 Stakeholders from both schools who spoke with HM Inspectors were all in favour of the council's proposal. They recognise the benefits of eliminating any increased pressure on the roll of Simpson Primary School. Children at Simpson Primary School are clear that new pupils are very welcome at their school. They express concern however, over available space at the school, both inside the building in terms of additional learning spaces, and outside in the playground. Children at Boghall Primary School are excited about the prospect, should the proposal go ahead, of learning and playing with new children who join their school. They recognise that the school could easily accommodate more pupils, both indoors and in the playground.

3.4 Representatives of the Parent Councils of both schools welcome the proposal. They view it as sensible with no immediate or longer term negative impact on either school. Parents welcome the early decision-making to ensure, if the proposal is accepted, clarity of school catchment area for families moving into the new housing. Parents at Boghall also welcome a potential increase in the roll to support increased diversity within the school community.

3.5 Staff at both schools are in favour of the proposal. Staff at Simpson Primary School recognise the impact an increased roll could have on the quality of learning and teaching. Operational aspects of the school, such as delivering physical education and lunch time routines, would be pressurised further. At Boghall Primary School, staff welcome a potential increase in the roll and recognise that it could help secure the management and class structure in the longer term.

### 4. Summary

HM Inspectors' agree there are clear educational benefits in the proposal. Given that building on the proposed site has not yet begun, no children or families are immediately affected by this proposal. HM Inspectors agree with the views of stakeholders that the proposal presents as a sensible solution to the potential capacity issues at Simpson Primary School. There are also potential benefits for children at Boghall Primary School having an increased roll. The securing of the current structure of classes and an increased peer group will have social and educational

benefits. The proposal also delivers best value by addressing capacity issues within the primary schools' estate.

**HM Inspectors**  
**May 2021**