

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Lothian Council to extend the catchment area of Law Primary School to include the whole of the new residential development at Ferrygate Meadow and the houses in the area of Westerdunes Park, North Berwick currently in the catchment area of Dirleton Primary School.

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* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of East Lothian Council's proposal to extend the catchment area of Law Primary School to include the whole of the new residential development at Ferrygate Meadow and the houses in the area of Westerdunes Park, North Berwick currently in the catchment area of Dirleton 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 a copy of 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of Law and Dirleton Primary 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:

- 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 Law and Dirleton Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East Lothian Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The consultation process ran from 24 October 2017 until 4 December 2017. Copies of the consultation document and an information leaflet were available on the East Lothian Council consultation website. In addition, paper copies and questionnaires were available in local schools and council buildings. An advertisement was placed in the local newspaper and the council used social media posts to raise further awareness. A public meeting was held at North Berwick High School on 21 November 2017. Only one local resident attended and they were in favour of the proposal. Less formal drop in sessions were also held on 6 November 2017 at Dirleton Primary School and on 9 November 2017 at North Berwick Community Centre.

2.3 Thirty-five written and electronic responses were received by the council with a majority in favour of the proposal and just over 17% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

HM Inspectors consider that the proposal has the potential to bring educational benefits. Children living close by in the same community will have the right to attend the same school. Future pressures on the capacity at Dirleton Primary School are less likely as a result of fewer homes in the revised catchment area, whilst Law Primary School has greater capacity in the future. The proposal will allow the council to achieve best value in managing its school estate in a growing community.

3.1 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were in support of the proposal. From the evidence collated by the council, stakeholders who agreed with the proposal stated that all children from the Ferrygate Meadow area should have the opportunity to attend Law Primary School with their close neighbours and friends. They saw the importance of a community of learners having common links. For a smaller number of parents, there were concerns expressed about the growing numbers of children in Law Primary with regard to space in the school and additional traffic this might bring to the area around the school.

3.2 The council has given assurances to families living in the affected areas with children currently attending Dirleton Primary School that they will continue to be guaranteed a place and that siblings will have the right to attend the same school as their older sisters or brothers should they wish to do so.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that this proposal has the potential to bring educational benefits to the children and families affected by the changes to the catchment areas. In taking the proposal forward, the council should continue to clarify misconceptions among a small number of parents about the scale of pupil numbers involved and the likely impact in and around Law Primary School.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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