

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Lothian Council to alter the catchment area for Letham Mains Primary School.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by 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 alter the catchment area for Letham Mains 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 and young people of neighbouring 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 1 December 2016 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 Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School, 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 8 November 2016 to 20 December 2016. During this period the council held a public meeting at Haddington Town House which was attended by four parents or other members of the public. Statutory consultees, including Parent Councils of the schools directly involved and Haddington Community Council, were informed of the consultation in writing. Consultation documentation was published on the East Lothian Council website and copies were available for public consultation at several venues during the consultation period, including the schools concerned. A proforma questionnaire and an email address were made available for responses. The council received 26 responses. Of the responses which provided an overall view about the council's proposal, a majority expressed support. Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors felt that the council had provided good opportunities for being consulted and for giving their views.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal involves a change to the zone boundary of Letham Mains Primary School. This school has still to be built but will serve planned housing developments in the Letham Mains area of the town of Haddington. The proposal involves extending the original planned catchment area for Letham Mains Primary School with a consequent small reduction in the catchment areas of both Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School. The affected area of land currently contains no residential properties.

3.2 The planned new Letham Mains Primary School will be extended to accommodate the increased school roll arising from the proposal. It has the potential to provide children who will attend the new school with a purpose-built learning environment well-suited to their learning needs. At the same time, the proposal will reduce the possibility of overcrowding at both Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School. As a result, the proposal offers clear educational benefits to children in each of the three schools.

3.3 Almost all parents, pupils and staff who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. There is a clear understanding that the rolls of both Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School would outstrip capacity in coming years as a result of the significant housing developments in the area.

3.4 In taking forward its proposal, the council should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that interim transition arrangements, whereby children living in the new Letham Mains housing development will be initially 'hosted' at King's Meadow Primary School, are well planned to meet these children's needs.

3.5 During the consultation period the council identified a minor inaccuracy in its proposal paper. In its final consultation report, the council should ensure that this inaccuracy is corrected.

4. Summary

East Lothian Council's proposal to extend the catchment area of the planned Letham Mains Primary School has clear educational benefits. The proposal has the potential to provide children who will reside in the Letham Mains housing developments with modern, purpose-built accommodation designed to meet the needs of its learners. The new school will provide a range of leisure and learning facilities which will potentially benefit the wider community. The proposal will also reduce the possibility of overcrowding at Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School. Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. In taking its proposal forward, the council should continue to engage with stakeholders over its planned transition arrangements for children who will attend the new school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
January 2017**