

**HMIE**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland  
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

# Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

**Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to establish a new all through school and its associated catchment areas within land at Shawfair and to realign the catchment areas of Danderhall Primary School and Dalkeith High School.**

June 2026

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from HMIE 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 establish a new all through school and its associated catchment areas within land at Shawfair and to realign the catchment areas of Danderhall Primary School and Dalkeith 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' 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 meeting held on 21 May 2026 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 Danderhall Primary School and Dalkeith High School, 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 public consultation ran from 26 March to 27 May 2026. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and on the council website. A public meeting was held at Danderhall Primary School on 21 May 2026 and was attended by six members of the public. Virtual

drop-in sessions were offered to those who could not attend the public meeting. Three hundred and twenty-one responses to the public consultation were received by the council. Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal, with a few expressing no opinion. Several respondents raised questions including travel and safety concerns, and the design and location of the proposed building. Several respondents questioned why there was no plan to provide a swimming pool in the new school.

2.3 Two meetings were also held with groups of pupils from Danderhall Primary School and Dalkeith High School. Many were keen to understand the implications of the proposal. For example, about the phased entrance year on year and how this might affect how it feels to attend the school and whether peer groups would be split up. A few were positive about the potential for a more local school they could walk to. A few queried the planned location of the new school, expressing concern about the local environment.

### **3. Educational aspects of proposal**

3.1 HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits to the proposal. The council believes that the new school will support a fully integrated approach to curriculum pathways from early years through to senior phase. They further believe that a new and flexible learning environment can inspire pupils and have a positive impact on the general health and wellbeing of learners, increase aspirations, attainment, achievement and positive destinations beyond school. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to support the delivery of the curriculum for all learners and improve transitions. That building a new school at Shawfair could provide an attractive learning environment for all children and young people, enabling them to be educated close to where they live.

3.2 The council states in the proposal, that the new building will be more accessible, including for those with additional support needs. HM Inspectors agree that the plans for the new building could provide an appropriate learning environment for those children and young people with additional support needs.

3.3 HM Inspectors agree that given the current pressure on school rolls at Danderhall Primary School and Dalkeith High School, and the increasing level of demand for additional support needs, providing a new school at Shawfair should help to address current capacity issues. However, parents at Danderhall Primary School, who met HM Inspectors, question the proposed timescale for the completion of the new building and whether it is realistic. They worry that if the building is not completed by August 2028, there could be further pressure on the rolls of the existing two schools and on the educational experience for these children. Parents and staff are also anxious about the lack of detailed information about the proposal. HM Inspectors consider that it will be important, if the proposal is agreed, that stakeholders are kept informed on progress. That the council should work with stakeholders to mitigate any issues that arise should timescales alter.

3.4 Almost all stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors are positive about the proposal. They recognise the potential educational benefits of creating a purpose-built learning environment in the Shawfair area. Staff are positive about the potential improved transitions between nursery and primary school and into secondary school. Children and young people like the idea of being in a new school, although a few also said it is important that there are separate areas for different age groups.

3.5 Children and young people, who meet HM Inspectors, thought it would be a good idea for most pupils to be able to walk or cycle to school. That this was a positive that could result from the changing catchments. A few parents expressed reservations about traffic and safe routes to school. Should the proposal be agreed, HM Inspectors recommend that the council work with stakeholders to ensure any traffic issues are mitigated and that active and safe routes to school are supported well.

3.6 A few stakeholders, that met with HM Inspectors, expressed concerns about the proposed location of the building. Parents at Danderhall Primary School feel that the council has not adequately taken account of environmental factors and have raised the matter with them. HM Inspectors consider that if the proposal is agreed, it will be important for the council to provide more detail to stakeholders as the project progresses. This should help to address stakeholder concerns.

3.7 Several of those who responded to the council's proposal and stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors are disappointed that no swimming pool is included in the plans. They feel strongly it will disadvantage the community and lead to additional travel for families.

## **4. Summary**

HM Inspectors agree that Midlothian Council's proposal to build a new school at Shawfair has potential education benefits. These include opportunities for smoother transitions for children and young people and improved provision for those with additional support needs. The proposal has the potential to provide an integrated approach to the delivery of the curriculum and ease the pressure on other schools in the area. However, HM Inspectors consider that should the proposal be approved, the issues raised by stakeholders regarding the practical arrangements for the new school need to be addressed. That the council should work with stakeholders to mitigate their concerns and should ensure that staff and parents are kept fully informed about the project progress.

**HM Inspectors**  
**June 2026**

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland