



HMIE

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdadh 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 clarify the catchment area of St David's Roman Catholic (RC) High School and to vary the Admissions Arrangements to Denominational Secondary Education.

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 clarify the catchment area of St David's Roman Catholic (RC) High School and to vary the Admissions Arrangements to Denominational Secondary Education. 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 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 19 May and 1 June 2026 and 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;
- visits to the site of St David's RC High School, Sacred Heart, St Andrew's, St David's, St Luke's, St Mary's, and St Mathew's RC Primary Schools, Midlothian and Loretto RC Primary School, East Lothian including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- meeting with Catholic Church representatives from Midlothian, East Lothian and the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh.

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 21 April to 4 June 2026. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and on the council website. Two public meetings were held on 19 May 2026 at Woodburn Primary School and 1 June 2026 at Sacred Heart RC Primary School. Across the two meetings there were 53 attendances. Stakeholders raised a wide range of questions and concerns. These included questions about school roll projections, why changes are necessary, and concerns that children from catchment schools within Midlothian could end up being lower priority than those from outwith. In addition to the survey responses, the council received seven written responses, including from the Parent Council of St David's RC High School, Loretto Parent Partnership and the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. These included the view that Loretto RC Primary School has historically always been a catchment school of St David's RC High School and that changing from the current situation where many children from Loretto RC Primary School go to St David's RC High School would undermine the school community.

2.3 A survey run by the council received 416 responses. Of these, 212 indicated they were from Midlothian, 187 from East Lothian, 11 from Edinburgh, and the remaining six stated other or did not say. These included 101 who stated that they were a parent/carer of Loretto RC Primary School pupils. Eighty-three were from a parent/carer of children at denominational primary schools in Midlothian. Seventy-four were from a parent/carer of pupils at St David's RC High School. The council asked a range of questions related to the proposal. Several respondents noted that the questions in the survey were confusing. In the responses, it is clear that a few disagreed who shared the same views as those that agreed and vice versa. Respondents were split on whether they agree or disagree with the proposal to clarify the catchment of St David's RC High School with 187 agreeing and 212 disagreeing.

2.4 There was strong support from those living in Midlothian to prioritise their children over children from East Lothian. In regards to the admission arrangements, those living in East Lothian and Edinburgh were more positive about including children from outwith Midlothian. In general, respondents focused on the benefits to the children of continuing their faith-based education in a denominational school. They also highlighted the long-standing history and relationship between the Loretto and St David's RC schools. Those in disagreement raised concerns such as the need to ensure children living in Midlothian, and attending a catchment RC primary school, should be able to move to secondary school alongside their classmates.

2.5 The council held sessions with children in St Mary's, St Andrews, Sacred Heart, St Luke's and St David's RC Primary Schools. Children expressed some confusion about the proposals being presented but were able to share their views. They consider that children should be able to go to the secondary school of their choice and importantly alongside their friends. However, they had mixed views about whether those who are Roman Catholic and live in Midlothian should get priority or not. A few queried the priority for those with siblings already at St David's RC High School as they feel this could be unfair for those who are an only child.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council set out the educational benefits that it believes will be achieved as a result of the proposal. HM Inspectors agree that there are some potential educational benefits. In particular that it will support pupils in both Midlothian and Loretto RC Primary School, East Lothian to continue their denominational education at the secondary school level. Defining the catchment area for St David's RC High School will provide clarity to families to determine whether their

residence falls within the designated boundary, and to understand the implications this may have on their application for a school place. However, the proposal is not what a few families understood to be the agreed position at a council meeting in September 2025. Whilst the proposed priority groups will affect families in particular circumstances differently, this is set out clearly within the proposal.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that the proposed variation to the School Admission Policy will not impact existing transition arrangements for children resident in Midlothian. However, the proposal is likely to have a less favourable impact on pupils from Loretto RC Primary School. Ending the previous informal historical arrangement with East Lothian Council may result in pupils being unable to start their transition to St David's RC High School until the outcome of their Placing Request is confirmed. As a result, children who may previously have benefited from well-planned enhanced transitions may be unable to begin their transition until the last term of primary school. HM Inspectors recommend that East Lothian Council work with Midlothian Council to consider how they might address this.

3.3 HM Inspectors agree that the limited variation to the School Admission Policy will not affect existing travelling arrangements for Midlothian pupils or staff. Both councils will continue to have a responsibility to provide transport for eligible children in line with their school transport policies. If the proposal goes ahead, this will result in Loretto RC Primary School catchment pupils being formally recognised as outwith the St David's RC High School catchment area. Parents of Loretto RC Primary School children would be required to submit a placing request in order to attend St David's RC High School. This has the potential to impact on school travel arrangements. If the proposal goes ahead, HM Inspectors recommend that East Lothian Council provides clarity for families from Loretto RC Primary School regarding school transport arrangements.

3.4 The proposal sets out the financial implications and the ongoing discussions between Midlothian and East Lothian Councils. HM Inspectors recommend that if this or any alternative proposal is approved, the two councils should, as suggested, consider entering into a formal agreement. This should help to provide reassurance and greater certainty to stakeholders who have expressed concerns about the proposal and any implications for future years.

3.5 HM Inspectors met with a wide range of stakeholders including children and young people, staff and parents. Most stakeholders that chose to meet with HM Inspectors believe that Loretto RC Primary School catchment should be included in the St David's RC High School catchment. This strongly held view is not weighted towards those from East Lothian but more widely held across most of the schools that HM Inspectors visited. Stakeholders consider pupils from Loretto RC Primary School to be a valued and integral part of the secondary school faith community. These stakeholders would prefer this history and tradition to be formalised as part of the St David's RC High School catchment. HM Inspectors note that formalising the catchment could provide additional reassurance to stakeholders and greater clarity around transition arrangements for Loretto RC Primary School children.

3.6 Overall, a majority of stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree that the proposed order of the priority groups is fair. Most stakeholders welcome the priority given to Midlothian residents and are strongly in favour of the priority given to children who are baptised in the Roman Catholic faith. A few stakeholders would prefer for Midlothian and Loretto RC Primary School resident catchment children who are baptised in the Roman Catholic faith to have equal priority. Children who met with HM Inspectors told us that it was important that siblings could attend school

together. However, they were worried that friends from their year group could be split up if some are baptised in the Roman Catholic faith and others are not. A few parents are concerned that giving priority to Loretto RC Primary School pupils could reduce the likelihood that families in Midlothian who chose a denominational primary for different reasons may not secure a place at St David's RC High School in the future.

3.7 Data provided at one of the council meetings suggests that there may be sufficient capacity at St David's RC High School for everyone who wishes to attend in the short term. Although HM Inspectors note that given the local context, in terms of significant population growth, this is hard to predict. Whilst the proposed priority groups may not currently have any impact on those wishing to continue their education at St David's RC High School, they may do so in the future. Should the proposal be approved, it will be important for the council to ensure that families continue to be provided with relevant information to make informed decisions about their choice of school.

3.8 As this proposal includes denominational schools, HM Inspectors consulted with church representatives from Midlothian, East Lothian and the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh. They highlighted the importance and benefit of children being able to continue their faith journey from primary school through to secondary school. They strongly believe that the long history and tradition of Loretto RC Primary School pupils going to St David's RC High School should continue. Whilst they understand why the council wishes to formally clarify the secondary school catchment, these church representatives feel that the current proposal does not formalise a long standing arrangement but instead changes it. They are also concerned that rather than fostering a welcoming and inclusive Roman Catholic ethos, the proposed catchment and admission arrangements seek to exclude people. The church representatives who met with HM Inspectors also raised some concerns about the consultation being overcomplicated and confusing.

3.9 During the consultation period the council was notified of alleged inaccuracies or omissions in the proposal. The council has published an omissions, corrections and amendments document on its website. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are some potential educational benefits to this proposal. The proposal should support pupils in Midlothian schools and Loretto RC Primary School to continue their denominational education at the secondary school level. The proposal will also provide clarity as to the defined catchment area for St David's RC High School. Overall, the proposal is not likely to negatively impact Midlothian residents. However, there are some potential negative impacts for East Lothian residents in relation to transition arrangements and school transport, which East Lothian Council will need to consider. Overall, most stakeholders that HM Inspectors met with, and many of those who responded to the consultation, believe that Loretto RC Primary School catchment should be formally included in the St David's RC High School catchment. If the proposal goes ahead, the council should continue to state clearly why the current proposal is the only available option.

In taking forward this proposal, it is important that Midlothian and East Lothian Councils continue to work closely together and set out a clear agreement between them. This will help to provide

clarity and assurance to stakeholders. Both councils should continue to work with relevant stakeholders in Midlothian and East Lothian areas as appropriate to address their concerns and to support them to make informed decisions about their choice of school. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

HM Inspectors
June 2026

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