

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to discontinue primary education at Glencorse Primary School from 25 June 2021 and extend the catchment areas of Mauricewood and Roslin Primary Schools to include the Glencorse catchment area.

November 2020

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 Midlothian Council's proposal to discontinue primary education at Glencorse Primary School from 25 June 2021 and extend the catchment areas of Mauricewood and Roslin Primary Schools to include the Glencorse catchment area. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory 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 the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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 virtual public meeting held on 29 October 2020 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 site of Glencorse Primary School, Mauricewood Primary School, Roslin Primary School and Beeslack Community 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 consultation period ran from 25 September 2020 until 13 November 2020. The council produced an information leaflet setting out details of the proposal which was issued to statutory consultees. Copies of the proposal paper and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQs) document were made available online. An advertisement was placed in the local press and on social media. Taking account of relevant current public health advice and Covid-19 restrictions at the time, the council was proactive and flexible in seeking ways to consult with stakeholders. A public meeting was held at Beeslack Community High School on 27 October 2020 where two stakeholders attended. A virtual public meeting was held on 29 October 2020 where one stakeholder attended. Virtual drop-in-sessions were offered to stakeholders on 7 October 2020. The council also held separate meetings with other groups of stakeholders including learners and the Parent Council of Glencorse Primary School. The council had explored with parents in June 2020 whether mothballing the school would be an option that they might favour. Parents were against this idea. Ninety-nine stakeholders responded to the council including to its online survey with approximately one third in favour of the proposal and two thirds against.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Glencorse Primary School is a non-denominational school providing education to P1-P7 pupils living in the Milton Bridge area of Penicuik and Auchendinny Village. There is no nursery provision at the school. Currently, there are seven children attending and the school structure has one composite class across stages P4-P7. Whilst 78 children live in the Glencorse catchment area, almost all parents choose to send their children to other local schools. Data shows that the roll in Glencorse has fallen over time. There have been no children enrolling into P1 since 2017.

3.2 The council has set out a number of reasonable arguments in support of its proposal. The council states that there will be educational benefits for children if the proposal goes ahead. In terms of learning, children will have greater opportunities in a larger school to work collaboratively with other children of a similar age and stage of development. There will be a broader range of activities which will enrich the curriculum for learners. Children will have access to a wider variety of lunch time and after school activities where children can socialise and have fun. Included in these activities are opportunities for children to develop teamwork with children of a similar age in sports and other contexts. The learning environment in Mauricewood and Roslin Primary Schools offers children the opportunity to participate in a wider range of active learning experiences with dedicated expressive arts and physical education spaces. The proposal will allow the council to make more efficient and effective use of its resources.

3.3 Parents and children from Glencorse Primary School who spoke with HM Inspectors did not agree with the proposal. They value the supportive environment and close attention provided by staff within the small school setting. Parents feel that there would be a reduction in the quality of the educational experience and individual attention for their children should the proposal go ahead. Parents are concerned about safe walking routes to both Mauricewood Primary and Roslin Primary Schools. A few Glencorse children expressed the view that moving to a larger school would give them a wider range of opportunities to make more friends and have different learning experiences in a larger group. Glencorse parents expressed dissatisfaction with how the council has dealt with the process. They feel that after a long period of uncertainty regarding the future provision at the school, the decision to proceed with the consultation was being rushed at a difficult time.

3.4 Children in Mauricewood Primary and Roslin Primary Schools spoke about the many benefits they believe their schools have to offer children who move into their respective schools. They are well used to welcoming new children into their schools, spoke positively about times where this has happened and look forward to welcoming Glencorse children should the proposal go ahead.

3.5 Staff across the cluster agree that very effective transition arrangements are in place and, should the proposal go ahead, children would be well supported in moving schools. Staff in Glencorse, whilst proud of the experiences children have received over time, acknowledge the challenge of the school remaining viable in the future when the roll reduces further. Close working relationships exist between cluster headteachers and their staffs. Teachers in the local schools work collaboratively on moderation and other aspects of professional learning.

4. Summary

Midlothian Council's proposal to close Glencorse Primary School and allow children and parents to choose Mauricewood or Roslin Primary Schools as their catchment school has potential educational benefits. HM Inspectors agree that a wider range and breadth of learning experiences will be available to children within other local schools. Children will be working with a larger peer group closely aligned to their age and stage. There will be more opportunities for after school activities and teamwork. The proposal will allow the council to deliver 'Best Value' through more efficient and effective use of resources. There is sufficient capacity and a strong willingness to include any children moving into both Roslin and Mauricewood Primary Schools. Should the council proceed with its plans to close Glencorse Primary School, it should continue to support children and parents who feel a sense of loss from the closure of a small school. Stakeholders value the existing relationships in the school community. Staff across the cluster should build on current good practice to support the transition of children displaced from Glencorse Primary School. The council should also work with parents to address their concerns over safe walking routes to school.

**HM Inspectors
November 2020**