

Intake Levels for Primary and Secondary Schools Session 2026/27

Report by Derek Oliver, Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships (Acting)

Report for Approval

1 Recommendations

Council is requested to:

- approve the requirement to apply intake limits, as detailed in the report, at a number of schools to safeguard places for pupils to be able to attend their catchment school.
- delegate authority to the Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships to determine the number of reserved places at each school and amend them, in consultation with the Education Convener, should the number of pupils requiring a place at a school significantly increase or decrease.

Council is otherwise requested to note:

- The estimated intake figures for primary and secondary schools in Section 3, tables 1 – 3.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

This report provides Council with an update on the enrolment of pupils and intake for the school session 2026/27. The report identifies a number of schools where there is pressure on school capacity, and the need for intake limits to safeguard places for catchment children and to manage placing requests.

Date: 31 March 2026

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3 Background

- 3.1 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended by section 33 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996) allows education authorities to reserve places for incoming pupils into catchment areas of schools. This assists education authorities in managing their schools and prevent them being at capacity at commencement of an academic year and furthermore enabling them to accommodate incoming catchment pupils at their catchment schools when they move into the area during the academic year.
- 3.2 Section 28A (3A) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended) provides a general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. Acceptance of a placing request for a child who is resident outwith the catchment area of a specified school could prevent the education authority from retaining reserved places at a specified school or in relation to any stage of education at the school. It is for this reason that the education authority may refuse to grant a placing request that would impact on the ability to reserve places in schools. Reserved places are not allocated to children making placing requests. The places are reserved for children who may move into the catchment area during the academic year.
- 3.3 Housing developments within Midlothian continue to generate growth in pupil numbers. This, combined with parental placing requests for certain schools, means that pupil intake limits are required to safeguard places for pupils to be able to attend their catchment school.
- 3.4 The Council's approach to pupil placement is to provide a place for every pupil at one of their catchment schools and to grant placing requests for siblings whenever this is possible. Where catchment schools are over-subscribed the pupil placement process reserves places at neighbouring schools to ensure every pupil is afforded the opportunity to attend a local school.
- 3.5 The following factors are considered for both primary and secondary schools when determining the appropriate number of reserved places that are likely to be required for pupils moving into the catchment area of the school during 2026/27:
 - The proposed level of capping at the school and number of expected pupils
 - The Local Development Plan
 - Current and planned housing developments
 - Projected school rolls
 - Projected migration into the catchment area
 - Information about reserved places from previous years
 - School capacities
 - Information known to us, for example, families indicating a move into the area before/after commencement of the academic year
 - Future planned expansion of the Learning Estate

- 3.6 Pupil enrolment for the 2026/27 school session is well underway. At the time of writing 1,429 Midlothian primary pupils and 1,251 Midlothian and Loretto secondary pupils have been registered to date for the August 2026 intake. This includes 215 primary pupils who have advised they intend to defer entry to primary school. The legislative deadline for the submission of placing requests is 15 March, and decisions on those requests will be made and communicated by letter to parents/carers at the end of April. To date, 334 placing requests have been received, including 23 from outwith Midlothian, which is an increase in the requests made last year (264). The Education Appeal Committee will be convened in May and June to consider any appeals received in respect of placing requests which have been refused.

Intake limits and Reserved Places Primary Schools

- 3.7 At the time of writing, the deadline for placing requests had not passed. These and deferrals are still being received and the intake limits in this paper and reserved places are subject to change. Council is asked to agree a maximum intake level in P1 as set out below.

Table 1: Primary 1 non-denominational schools' catchment numbers, estimated intake numbers, intake limits and reserved places August 2026

Non-Denominational Primary Schools	Catchment P1s	P1s registered net of deferrals	Estimated P1 intake August 2026	P1 intake limit August 2026
Bilston Primary School	59	58	50	50*
Bonnyrigg Primary School	74	68	60	63
Burnbrae Primary School	82	70	59	66
Cornbank St James Primary School	43	38	35	40
Cuiken Primary School	52	39	32	38
Danderhall Primary School	109	109	99	99**
Easthouses Primary School	46	36	22	25
Gore Glen Primary School	75	58	53	56
Gorebridge Primary School	66	53	35	40
Hawthornden Primary School	44	33	35	40
King's Park Primary School	70	69	61	66
Lasswade Primary School	51	49	43	50
Lawfield Primary School	57	36	30	40
Loanhead Primary School	21	20	25	25
Mauricewood Primary School	80	75	57	57***
Mayfield Primary School	41	27	30	33
Moorfoot Primary School	8	8	13	14
Newtongrange Primary School	42	40	39	56
Paradykes Primary School	68	68	57	63
Rosewell Primary School	50	49	37	38
Roslin Primary School	84	83	68	68****
Stobhill Primary School	27	24	28	33
Strathesk Primary School	52	34	29	33
Tynewater Primary School	15	15	17	25
Woodburn Primary School	127	101	90	100
	1,443	1260	1104	1218

Catchment P1 numbers includes children who have chosen to register at their catchment non-denominational school

**This is a one-year increase in intake beyond the normal intake limit of 49.*

***This is a one-year increase in intake beyond the normal intake limit of 93.*

**** This is a one-year increase in intake beyond the normal intake limit of 56.*

***** This is a one-year increase in intake beyond the normal intake limit of 63.*

Table 2: Primary 1 Primary 1 denominational schools' catchment numbers, estimated intake numbers and intake limits August 2026

Denominational Primary Schools	P1s registered net of deferrals etc	Estimated P1 intake August 2026	P1 intake limit August 2026
Sacred Heart RC Primary School	41	26	30
St Andrew's RC Primary School	30	24	25
St David's RC Primary School	31	25	25
St Luke's RC Primary School	33	25	25
St Mary's RC Primary School	28	23	25
St Matthew's RC Primary School	1	1	10
	164	124	140

3.8 When considering how to cap school rolls, Midlothian Council, as an education authority, must look at all schools and available resources. The total population of children who require places in schools is considered and, at a local level, how many are within each catchment area. Each school will manage its resources and this is balanced with other schools' situations to ensure that resources are equitably shared throughout Midlothian, thereby avoiding unreasonable public expenditure.

3.9 The intake at denominational schools will be managed with the application of pupil intake limits and by giving first priority to those who are baptised Roman Catholic. Intake limits will be set in the context of the number of applications from pupils who are baptised Roman Catholic, the availability of suitably qualified teachers and the capacity of all schools serving each catchment area. It is not anticipated that the number of baptised pupils wishing to attend the denominational schools will exceed their intake capacities.

Intake Limits and Reserved Places Secondary Schools

3.10 The table below shows the Secondary 1 intake limits and reserved places for August 2026.

Table 3: Secondary 1 intake limits August 2026

School Name	Catchment S1	Estimated S1	S1 intake limit
Beeslack High School	131	144	150
Dalkeith High School	230	226	230*
Lasswade High School	256	313	320*
Newbattle High School	285	269	270*
Penicuik High School	170	132	140
St David's RC High School	173	159	160
Total	1,245	1243	1270

**The intake limits for Dalkeith, Lasswade and Newbattle have been increased beyond their sustainable limits. The number of pupils will be monitored as the main placing round progresses to see whether the intake limits can be reduced.*

- 3.11 Rolls at the high schools need to be capped to ensure places can be reserved for pupils who may move into the catchment areas. Pupil enrolment will be managed by use of intake limits, proactive management of placing requests and early engagement with parents and schools on the optimal placement of Secondary 1 pupils for August 2026. The intake limits at Dalkeith, Lasswade and Newbattle may need to be reduced to below the sustainable limit in future years to ensure the schools operate within manageable capacity limits. The changes made to Lasswade High School Associated Schools Group, moving Loanhead and Paradykes Primary Schools to the Beeslack High School Associated Schools Group with effect from August 2026 intake, will reduce the catchment numbers at Lasswade High School in future years¹.
- 3.12 Limiting the number of pupils that the school can admit each academic session allows schools to timetable and employ a suitable number of teachers. In general, capping will support appropriate and early organisation for schools to meet their pupils' needs for a high level of education. Capping prevents detrimental impact on pupils' education and ensures effective and efficient management of resources by the authority.

Pupil Placement Guidelines

- 3.13 Current policy guidelines on Admission to Primary and Secondary Schools are included in Appendix D.

Summary

- 3.14 As in previous years, pupil intake for August 2026 will be assessed regularly through the main placing round process, ensuring effective management of the pupil placement process by taking account of placing requests and reserving places in neighbouring schools to provide places for pupils whose catchment school is over-subscribed. Intake limits based on schools' capacity will be applied as necessary in order to prevent schools from exceeding their capacity.
- 3.15 The letters confirming Primary 1 school places and the outcome of secondary placing requests will be issued to parents/carers at the end of April.
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4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The Devolved School Management scheme sets out how resources are allocated to schools with reference to roll and need. There are no direct resource implications arising as a result of this report.

4.2 Digital

There are no direct resource implications for Digital.

4.3 Risk

The recent, ongoing, and planned house building in Midlothian is resulting in increased pupil numbers. There is a significant risk that the council will not have a place for every pupil at their catchment school and the Learning Estate Strategy considers this from a strategic perspective. In the short term this risk is mitigated by the application of limits on pupil intake, reviews of placing requests, and, in the case of denominational schools, by giving priority to those who are baptised Roman Catholic.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

This paper informs Council of the impact of managing pupil admissions in line with national and local policy and procedure. IIA not required.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B - Primary School Pupil Census 2025

Appendix C - Secondary School Pupil Census 2025

Appendix D - [Policy Guidelines - Admission to Primary and Secondary Schools](#)

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Key outcome: Individuals and communities have improved health and skills for learning, life and work

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Limiting the number of pupils that schools can admit each academic session allows schools to timetable and employ a suitable number of teachers. In general, capping supports appropriate and early organisation for schools to meet their pupils' needs for a high level of education. Capping prevents detrimental impact on pupils' education and ensures effective and efficient management of resources by the authority, aligning with Best Value.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

This report informs Council of the potential impact on communities arising from pressure on school places.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The aim of this paper supports the priority to reduce the inequalities in learning outcomes by improving the quality of learning and teaching, leading to raised levels of achievement and attainment, by providing every child with the opportunity to attend school in their local community.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Council's approach to pupil placement adopts a preventative approach by maximising the opportunities for pupils to attend school in their local community.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The sustainability issues relating to this report relate to the sufficiency of schools places particularly in areas of housing development. The provision of additional capacity is being taken forward via the Learning Estate Strategy coupled with the School Catchment Review Programme.

Appendix B – Primary Schools Pupil Census 2025

School	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Roll
Bilston Primary School	50	33	32	33	38	31	25	242
Bonnyrigg Primary School	51	52	57	59	61	59	64	403
Burnbrae Primary School	44	52	58	54	66	72	77	423
Cornbank St James Primary School	31	36	31	54	45	50	44	291
Cuiken Primary School	36	36	26	26	32	30	44	230
Danderhall Primary School	60	72	56	59	63	60	47	417
Easthouses Primary School	18	26	5	12	10	4	4	79
Gore Glen Primary School	51	45	50	43	56	50	47	342
Gorebridge Primary School	38	35	24	51	35	35	55	273
Hawthornden Primary School	31	37	21	43	43	36	34	245
King's Park Primary School	60	75	58	68	79	73	68	481
Lasswade Primary School	50	49	38	56	45	37	55	330
Lawfield Primary School	42	31	33	39	45	44	31	265
Loanhead Primary School	17	12	26	23	22	26	30	156
Mauricewood Primary School	52	49	48	53	48	46	45	341
Mayfield Primary School	28	37	36	34	38	35	33	241
Moorfoot Primary School	12	12	13	10	14	11	13	85
Newtongrange Primary School	45	47	49	50	52	56	50	349
Paradykes Primary School	36	54	59	52	49	53	48	351
Rosewell Primary School	31	31	24	31	29	38	24	208
Roslin Primary School	63	51	48	40	49	50	29	330
Sacred Heart RC Primary School	16	24	22	18	9	18	18	125
St Andrew's RC Primary School	26	21	17	25	15	21	22	147
St David's RC Primary School	22	26	22	25	29	24	31	179
St Luke's RC Primary School	22	18	26	22	26	28	32	174
St Mary's RC Primary School	24	22	24	29	29	30	23	181
St Matthew's RC Primary School	4	7	11	5	11	5	10	53
Stobhill Primary School	24	28	33	30	20	30	30	195
Strathesk Primary School	25	25	26	23	28	28	32	187
Tynewater Primary School	18	21	21	18	17	24	35	154
Woodburn Primary School	85	91	93	82	101	108	94	654
Total	1112	1155	1087	1167	1204	1212	1194	8131

Appendix C – Secondary Schools Pupil Census 2025

School	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Roll
Beeslack Community High School	136	137	146	152	132	77	780
Dalkeith High School	195	214	192	197	160	99	1057
Lasswade High School	308	311	301	302	243	172	1637
Newbattle High School	264	261	251	266	190	81	1313
Penicuik High School	100	131	133	126	74	63	627
St David's RC High School	139	142	133	148	134	92	788
Total	1142	1196	1156	1191	933	584	6202