

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review non-denominational secondary catchment areas of Armadale Academy, Linlithgow Academy, West Calder High School and Whitburn Academy.

August 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland 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 West Lothian Council to review the non-denominational secondary catchment areas of Armadale Academy, Linlithgow Academy, West Calder High School and Whitburn Academy. 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 meeting held on 3 June 2024 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 sites of Armadale Academy and Linlithgow Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 West Lothian Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council ran a statutory consultation from 13 May to 28 June 2024. The proposal was communicated to stakeholders via the council website, through social media and local press. The consultation paper was made available in the affected schools and other council buildings. Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation in writing or by email. The council received one response, which was not relevant to this consultation and related to education more generally. The council held a public meeting in Armadale Academy, which no members of the public attended.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council states that this proposal to alter non-denominational secondary catchment areas is to ensure that the catchment areas fit better with local community boundaries and align with linked primary school catchment areas. The proposal should not see any change to the current school rolls and all young people will continue to attend their current secondary school. Of the four small areas impacted by the proposal, only one area has young people attending West Lothian schools.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to this proposal. The council's educational benefits statement states that a key educational advantage for the schools affected is that they will continue to deliver the full breath of Curriculum for Excellence. HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal should have no detrimental impact on the delivery of education. In the proposal, the council confirmed that young people can continue to attend their existing school for the remainder of their secondary education. The council have further guaranteed that any younger siblings would be entitled to attend the same school as their older sibling. This proposal will also ensure that secondary and primary school catchment areas are aligned. HM Inspectors agree there is benefit in young people being entitled to attend the same secondary school as their peers from primary school.

3.3 HM Inspectors met with stakeholders from Armadale Academy and Linlithgow Academy, including young people, parents and staff. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed changes. They agree that the revised catchment areas align better with local community boundaries. Young people who met with HM Inspectors appreciate that they can continue their education in their current school, where they already have friends. Young people, parents and staff also value that transport entitlements will continue to be in place for young people whilst they remain at their current school. They believe that this proposal will have little effect on families and should not impact on learning.

3.4 During the consultation period the council was notified of a small typing error in the proposal, which it later rectified.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to the proposal to review the catchment areas for the four secondary schools. If agreed, this proposal will align the schools with community and natural boundaries within West Lothian. It will also ensure alignment to primary school catchment areas. Stakeholders do not have objections to the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
August 2024**