

STATUTORY PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

PROPOSAL - PROPOSED CLOSURE OF HADDINGTON INFANT SCHOOL AND KING'S MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS ASSOCIATED CATCHMENT AREA FOR HADDINGTON

WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2018
KNOX ACADEMY, HADDINGTON

PRESENT:-

Chris Webb, Independent Adviser, Chair of Meeting
Fiona Robertson, Head of Education
Lesley Brown, Quality Improvement Manager
Zoe McFadzean, HR Business Partner
Pauline Smith, Principal Officer (Information & Research)
Fiona Brown, Principal Officer
Val McIntyre, Principal Officer
Karen Haspolat, Quality Improvement Officer
Rob Lewis, Senior Information Officer
Katy Johnstone, Graduate Intern
David Gilmour, Web Officer
Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Councillor John McMillan
29 members of the public

Chris Webb (CW) introduced the panel and talked through the agenda for the evening. CW outlined that the panel and additional Officers of the Council were present to answer any questions attendees may have. He stated that any questions that could not be specifically answered at the meeting would be recorded and answered for the person at a later date, within the period of the Consultation Process.

CW identified that a Google link had been set up through which anonymous questions could be asked via attendees phones.

CW then gave an overview of the Consultation process as outlined in the Schools Consultation Act (2010). Further explanation was provided by CW on the potential impact on the timescales if Scottish Ministers decided to call in the proposal. The proposal could potentially be called in due to the nature of both Haddington Infant and Kings Meadow Primary being closed as establishments. The Consultation and any potential call-in process, as related to the Schools Consultation Act (2010) is detailed in the Proposal Document.

Fiona Robertson (FR) then presented the proposal, as outlined in the Proposal Document.

Proposal

- If approved, Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School will be closed with effect from August 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- Even if the Council makes the decision to close the two schools and the Scottish government doesn't call it in, there would need to be a transition period whilst that is moved forward, it's not a decision that will be taken without further consideration of the need to involve stakeholders in the transition.

- A new primary school and its associated catchment area will be established for Haddington with effect from August 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- The new primary school will operate on a split site within the existing buildings and facilities for Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School;
- Members of the parent council asked if we could have representation from other schools in the authority where perhaps the Head Teacher operates across two schools or across two buildings, unfortunately due to other commitments they were unable to come tonight but they are going to the joint Parent Council meeting that's being held on 21st February.
- Children attending Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School will transfer to the new primary school with effect from August 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Background

- The Haddington catchment area is currently served by two separate non-denominational schools: Haddington Infant School (Nursery to P3) and King's Meadow Primary School (P4 to P7) with separate operational and management structures.
- One of only two primary catchment areas in East Lothian where P1 to P3 and P4 to P7 pupils from the same catchment are taught in two separate schools requiring an additional stage transition between P3 and P4. Across Scotland there were only three mainstream local authority Infant Schools registered as open as at September 2016.
- One of the key outcomes identified for sessions 2017/18 to 2019/20, as set out in the East Lothian Education Service Local Improvement Plan 2017-18, is consistency in our approaches to planning learning, teaching and assessment, particularly at key milestones. This consistency is vital for learner progression, effective transition and raising attainment for all.
- Evidence following the Education Service Reviews of the Haddington Infant School & King's Meadow Primary School in 2016, which are part of the duty of the authority in terms of Quality Assuring the education provision within our schools, highlighted that they needed to develop stronger and more effective links to improve curriculum transition.
- The need for improved transition is recognised internationally, nationally and locally and is central to continuity of education and progression through the curriculum.
- The additional transition between P3 and P4 presents many challenges, the most significant being how to ensure meaningful progression and continuity of learning from P3 to P4.
- This proposal has been put forward by the Education Service to address the additional transition challenges for children, staff and parents. Providing more equitable education provision across the School Estate where almost all schools operate as Nursery to Primary 7 settings.

Education Benefits

This proposal will provide the opportunity:

- to develop a coherent and progressive curriculum from Early Level through to Second Level;
- to develop consistent learning and teaching experiences for pupils across both existing schools;

- for staff to build relationships with families from Nursery and sustain those relationships through to P7, especially for those pupils who require enhanced support;
- for staff working across stages to further ensure a shared understanding of each child as a learner and expectations and progression from Nursery to P7;
- at this point in time children in Primary 3 with additional support needs and who have built up relationships with pupil support assistants for example, have to start again when they move in to P4 and build up relationships with new staff.
- for teachers to work across all stages of the school which would support professional learning;
- this does not mean that if you are currently a P1 teacher in Haddington Infant School you will be asked to be a P6 teacher, the new Head Teacher would be working with all the staff in the school to discuss their aspirations and what they want to develop skills wise. That is the current practice in all of our schools. The Head Teacher works closely with staff over the skillset they want to develop, in terms of making those decisions around the stages that they work within. We are very clear in Education, and HMI are very clear, that teachers need to understand the curriculum in terms of what comes before and what comes after the stage they are working in. It's absolutely critical that our staff are able to communicate in terms of the breadth of learning, the depth of learning across each of the Curriculum for Excellence levels, and its deemed effective practice in relation to our staff having an understanding of the building blocks along the way. Often that comes from moving from stage to stage to get that understanding.
- to develop a new vision, values and aims which are shared and understood across the whole school learning community from Nursery to P7; It was identified in the reviews that as a learning community they have very distinct vision values and aims and yet they are part of the same learning community.
- to establish one Parent Council with equitable membership across all stages of the school. This would enable parents to build and develop consistent relationships and to influence and support developments across the whole learning community.
- All this will support much smoother and improved pastoral and curricular transitions across the stages from Nursery through to P7.

National context and research evidence

- How Good Is Our School? (4th Edition) is the self-evaluation tool by which our schools evaluate the provision within the school: the provision of education, the curriculum, learning, teaching assessment, pastoral, partnerships – including partnerships with parents. There is a new quality indicator as part of this new edition of HGIOS and because, nationally, transitions are seen as absolutely critical in ensuring continuity and progression in children's learning and attainment. This quality indicator – 2.6 – is devoted to transitions. It has various themes to do with the aspect of learning and teaching transition but there are also sections around the pastoral care transitions which have been taken account of, in relation to looking at moving the schools to one new primary school and having a seamless progression from Nursery through to P7.

- We contacted professors who are renowned internationally for their work on transitions and looked at some of the research. It's not just curriculum transitions that are important, it's also the social and emotional impact of transitions and we've taken that on board in terms of making the changes. Looking at the impact on P3/4s and looking at educational research in relation to social transitions, relationships, developmental, interactions that our children have with our staff, these elements have been taken on board in terms of taking this proposal forward.
- One of these professors will be attending a future Head Teacher conference to speak with head teachers in relation to the importance of transitions, because as nationally, that is a key area that has an impact on children's learning and progression.
- Supporting Positive Transitions
- Familiar environment is a critical factor, contact with the same people, particularly for ASN and vulnerable children. There are children within the stages at Haddington Infant that receive support from support assistants and other staff and have that transition period when they're moving into P4 and they have to start building further relationships. That is one of the aspects that the educational researcher highlighted that we should be looking to seek improvement, in relation to the children's social, emotional and mental wellbeing.
- Children's relationships with staff and teachers are crucial to their support network.
- Continuity of Curriculum for Excellence: At this point in time we have two very distinct schools and the reviews highlighted the different approaches. The pedagogical approaches within the culture and ethos would be more in sync in one school and there is a need to take on board the Empowering Schools Consultation. East Lothian Council's Education Committee approved East Lothian Council's response to that consultation and we will hear the outcome in summer. There is proposed legislation that would mean that if these schools stayed as two distinct schools, the Head Teachers are able to deliver the curriculum they see fit at each of their schools. In Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School that would impact on transitions, if there was a variability in pedagogy and the approaches to learning and teaching within the schools.
- Leadership and Management, a new management team would be looking at shared pedagogical approaches Nursery to P7 and building on early years practice
- Improved communication – academic, pastoral and emotional.
- Shared understanding of transition – not just the transfer of information about their learning but much more about the impact of transition.
- There would be a sense of belonging in a school that's Nursery to P7 – familiar staff, one uniform, one school website

Transition for All – Next Steps

This is transition for all, this is not just transition for children. This is transition for parents, staff, children and the community. The Council makes the decision on the outcome of the consultation, not the Education Service. However, what has been set out is some of the next steps in relation to if the Council did approve the proposal:

- Appointment of new head teacher as per protocol – there is a local authority protocol in relation to the appointment of the new head teacher for the new school, which would be the first step.
- With the new Head Teacher in post there would be a move to forming a Transition Action Group. That group would take a phased approach to move towards aspects such as the school and nursery name. That Transition Action group would have parental membership, staff membership, trade union membership and it would be a group coming together to make that transition to a new school.
- School and nursery name – the Transition Action Group would be working with the community to determine the school and the nursery name moving forward. That would not be a decision taken by the Education Service.
- Staffing – In relation to staffing, as is the current practice, primary schools funding is determined by the school roll and according to that school roll there is an allocation relating to the senior management team structure. Head Teacher's do not have to put that structure in place, for example, in any school generally, if the budget allowed for two Deputy Head Teachers as part of the senior management but the Head Teacher felt they wanted one Deputy Head Teacher and principal teachers, then that is entirely up to them. They determine the structure they would like within the school. In terms of the Empowering Schools Consultation, Head Teachers said that East Lothian Council already allows them to determine their staffing structure and that's not in place in some other authorities. If the combined school is allocated a Head Teacher and 3 Deputies, that is the sort of management structure that could be in place and would be determined by the Head Teacher. This is why the new Head Teacher is critical moving forward.
- Parental involvement – parents would be involved in terms of moving towards one Parent Council, but the Transition Action group would be consulting on the school name, on the school uniform etc. Parents would be fully involved in that timeframe moving forward into one school. There will be an appropriate timeframe to ensure the community is involved in the process.
- Moving to a potential Common school day, timetable – looking at start/finish times, looking at lunch times, looking at it in terms of how the curriculum is delivered across the school, looking at the opportunities for different stages to come together for interdisciplinary learning, for example. This would be something the Head Teacher and staff would work on and the common school day would not change without consultation.
- Curriculum rationale and delivery - the staff would be taking forward the agreement on a learning teaching assessment policy in line with East Lothian's Policy.
- Transition policy (stage to stage): Currently in both schools there are transition arrangements for transferring information on children, as they move from stage to stage. A new transition policy for the one school would be developed.
- All of that will take time and it's important to know that it will not happen overnight. For example if parents feel that the best way to change to a new uniform, that has been decided by the community, is that they only change at the point at which they outgrow the uniform they are in, that's absolutely appropriate. These are the discussions that parents would be involved in and if there is parental agreement that's how you would move forward with that

new uniform. Children would be involved in that decision, and from meetings so far, they like purple. Hopefully that gives you an idea of the steps that would be taken and that it would be over time. You need time to make sure that everyone has had an opportunity to be involved in the process. When talking about staffing, this refers to all staffing; teachers, support staff, facilities management in the school, all will be part of the discussions moving forward. In terms of staffing, both schools are due to grow, and we will be increasing the staff in the school as we move forward.

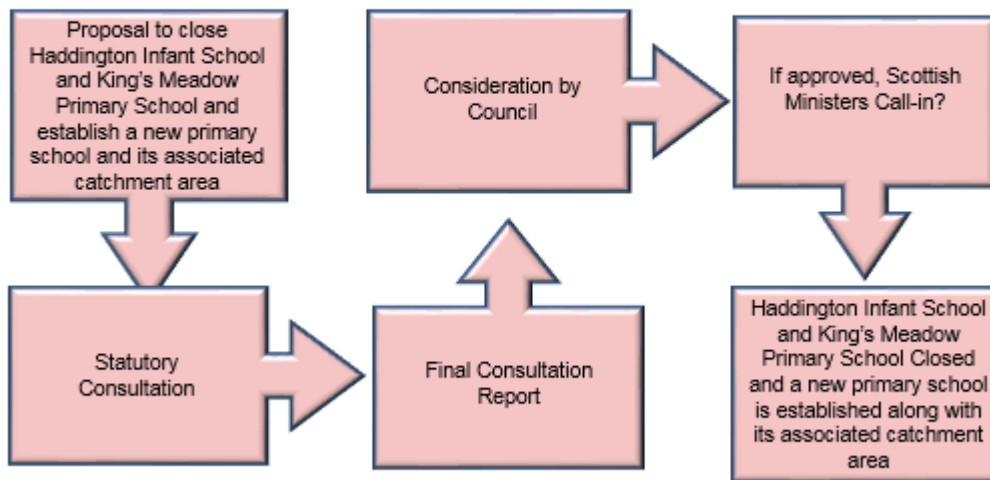
School Capacity

- The primary-aged population in Haddington is projected to increase steadily over the next 6 years.
- The combined P1 to P7 roll of the two affected schools as at September 2017 pupil census is 659.
- By 2020, the P1 to P7 roll of the proposed new primary school is projected to be 787, increasing to 814 by 2023.
- The average size of non-denominational primary schools across the six main towns in East Lothian in 2017 is 430. The average size is projected to increase to 536 by 2020 and 590 by 2023, ranging from a P1-P7 roll of 192 to 1,241. We've got quite a wide range across the school rolls across the school estate.
- Haddington Infant School is due to be extended to accommodate the projected P1-P3 pupils arising from new houses in the catchment area.
- The combined planning capacity of the buildings and facilities of Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School, with the planned extension at Haddington Infant School, will be 894.
- The combined planning capacity of 894 can accommodate the projected P1-P7 pupil roll for the proposed new single school structure.
- Further expansion of the buildings and facilities are not required as a result of this proposal.

Map of Locations



Project Timeline



Questions were invited from attendees:

Question (Parent of pupil in King's Meadow):

You said at the start that the budgets are based on the roll. If that's the case, you would expect that added together, the roll would be the same therefore the budget would be the same. However, the total budget in the document is £87,000 less than the two combined budgets and I wondering why that's the case?

Fiona Brown (FB): It has to do with Devolved School Management (DSM) formula and the number of management roles that the school would get the budget for. You would really need someone from finance to explain the numbers in depth, but some of it will involve the upper structure of the school. Haddington Infant School and King's Meadow Primary School could be entitled to two Depute Head Teachers each, under the DSM formula at this point in time, but under the DSM formula a single school of 500-800 could be entitled to 3 Depute Head Teachers.

The parent asked a further question:

So it's not just based on roll, it is based on roll and other factors?

FB: It's based on roll and additional factors. The formula is quite complicated and it is based on a three year average, not just the school roll for that year. They look at the average school roll, the structure and the DSM formula.

FR: Would you like more information on the DSM formula?

The parent made a statement: No

Question (Parent of pupil at Haddington Infant):

This is a follow up question to what we've just heard. At the moment we've got two schools, two senior management teams - and because I work in a school - I have every confidence that both these management teams are very busy. It sounds like we're going to have less people in those management roles, managing the same estate in terms of the buildings and potentially an increasing roll in pupils. It's hard to see how that is an advantage to the young people in those settings?

FR: At this point in time there are very few of our schools that do not have one management team that goes from Nursery to P7. That is how almost all of our schools operate across the county, and that provides efficient education for children in our schools.

The parent asked a further question:

Could it then be argued the children in the schools we've talked about are at an advantage over the other schools that you've mentioned, because they've actually got more support in that management tier?

FR: Not if you're looking at curriculum transitions and pastoral transitions. Remember, we look at this from the perspective of the children as well as the staff. In terms of the children, we're looking at having continuity and progression in our learning from Nursery right through to P7. In terms of staffing we're looking at opportunities to move from stage to stage, building on their skills in relation to undertaking progression right the way through Curriculum for Excellence levels, so it's not just looking at the senior management team. That senior management team structure system operates perfectly well across all our other primary schools in East Lothian, including schools that actually have a split campus at the moment or even schools that are under a shared headship.

Question (Parent of pupil in Haddington Infant):

You've based a lot of your arguments on the educational benefits. In the consultation document there's a whole list of them and you say you've done a huge amount of research on finding this information. I'm curious to find out in this extensive research, did you find no other counter argument that says specialising, particularly in the infant side of things, is better? You found nothing whatsoever, no contrary person, because I find this slightly difficult to believe. We can always find things to support our existing views.

FR: I think the difficulty that we have is that there are very few infant schools across Scotland. In terms of the evidence base from either the inspectorate or the researchers working within education at this point in time, in Scotland, you'll really be struggling to find schools in any other Local Authority that are Nursery to P3 or infant schools. Unless you change the whole education system, and I'm talking about looking at the system in Finland, for example – and that would be something different to what we have here in Scotland.

The parent asked a further question:

The fact that there isn't any evidence doesn't necessarily mean that it's not there, that there isn't a benefit.

FR: But the rationale for that change has been from the educational benefits that we've got in the proposal, that's why many of the authorities have removed infant schools, because they've moved towards having an early years to P7 primary school.

The parent made a statement:

That's not really answering my question. Just because it's all based on Scotland where there isn't a body of evidence of infant schools, that doesn't mean to say that there is no educational benefits in having them separated. I think that's the concerning thing here, particularly in transition which is one specific piece – there is a bigger picture as well.

FR: It is an important piece, and again, in terms of research you could trawl a lot of the research to find varying views. We looked for experts in terms of not just in Scotland, but that are renowned for their work internationally – before considering that research.

The parent asked a further question:

And you found nothing?

FR: We asked them about the impact of the transition we were looking at in terms of P3/4 and that was the feedback we got.

The parent asked a further question:

No, not just transitions - you've had no one saying "there are some pros to it"?

FR: Not in terms of the infant and the primary. What we had was that even within a Nursery to P7, you may not get positive transitions because there is no clear transition policy. What we had as a counter argument, if you were talking about what they came back to us on, was that because you have one school, this does not necessarily mean to say you have effective transitions. There are multiple transitions around when children move from stage to stage, and if the school does not have an effective process in place, then being in one school will not make any difference. One of the points they made was that you have to ensure that there is a clear transition policy. That was a counter to that, even at early learning and childcare right the way to P7, if the school doesn't have an effective transition programme it can fail.

Question (Parent of pupil at Kings Meadow Primary):

About educational research, what were your findings about the educational research regarding a very large, what I would consider quite a large primary school, of 600 pupils? I know in East Lothian there are plenty of examples, across Scotland the average is around 400. What was the information that you found on the best size for a primary school?

FR: There is no best size of a primary school and there are positives around transitions. They are fundamentally based on the strength of the leadership in the school, in ensuring that the effective policies and practice are in place and so size doesn't impact. If you've got the right ethos, the right culture in the school and everyone is signed up to that ethos and culture and it's an inclusive learning community. Size does not matter in relation to the impact on the transitions.

The parent asked a further question:

I wasn't asking about transition process, I was asking about the impact on the children and their learning, and how they feel about school – that sort of more general question.

FR: There is no ideal size of a school, it is down to how you develop learning culture within the school. How you ensure a positive learning environment, how you ensure the children have that sense of belonging to whatever community they are part of – and again that's involving the parental community in terms of how they support the school. So you have real strengths, whether it's a small school or whether it's a large school, because it's very much about the ethos and culture of the school.

Question (Member of the public):

You must have done a cost/benefit analysis in appraising this decision and all we've had so far are really benefits, so could you give us some costs. I'm talking about qualitative rather than quantitative costings, some of the negatives you may have found in your research?

FR: In terms of the costs and the educational benefits, this is not a cost saving exercise.

The member of public asked a further question:

I'm talking about softer things, qualitative stuff, so there must have been downsides?

Another member of public asked a question:

Will class sizes get bigger?

FR: The class sizes are determined by the school roll and again we have in place policies for the size our classes can be. We discussed this at Haddington Infant School last week, so again we have set class sizes in terms of P1-P2, and P3 to P7. Whenever we're looking at the makeup of the classes, the Head Teacher will look at the school roll, will determine the classes and meet with the Education service. We work in partnership with the Head Teacher to look at the way that the classes are organised. Class organisation is not something that is just organised by the centre, we look at the number of pupils, where they would fit in terms of class sizes. For example if there was a P3/4 composite in a school across the authority and there are 3 P3s we would be working with the Head Teacher and saying is that the best way to organise those classes. At this point in time, for example, we've got 12 schools across the county where, in liaison with the Head Teacher, we have felt that the formula for working out the classes would not be in the best interests of the children and we've put an additional teacher in as well as an additional class. So that cost benefit analysis of some of those areas like class sizes etc, at the moment, if it moved to one school the organisation of classes or any of those aspects would be in discussion with the senior management in the school.

The member of public asked a further question:

So I guess what I was trying to get out of you, are there no negatives at all to this proposal because we're only seeing positives?

FR: The Education Service would not be making the proposal if it didn't feel that it was going to be a positive aspect for the children, for the staff and for the community.

The member of public asked a further question:

I get that but there may be something, some negatives and positives, could you maybe tell us what they are?

FR: I think there will be challenges moving from two schools to one. They are schools that have existed for a number of years so – from an educational aspect - people are obviously emotionally affected by that change. I think moving to the one school there will be an aspect of moving from two communities into one. I do take on board that that would be a challenge but I don't see any negative aspects in terms of our focus on providing education that's to the benefit of the children in the community.

Question (Parent, Haddington Infant and King's Meadow):

I think we can all agree we're very lucky to have the school structure that we have in Haddington and many of us actually chose to come here, to raise our families here, because of the school size. There's a lot of jargon in this document and there's lots of really good positive educational points. However, as we've been hearing tonight there's nobody who has clearly said that this is a counter argument. We can understand what Scottish Education Policy is, this is a good clear document, however there are lots of things I feel are definitely worth fighting for in Haddington and the status quo has worked for many years. I also think that there are great positives in having transitions, it'd be interesting to hear from Knox Academy on how pupils deal with coming to high school who have already done a transition. Do they transition there better, as opposed to other pupils who come from smaller schools who haven't had that transition. Life is about transition, our children are never going to walk into a job and think "I've done this job, I'm just going to sit at my desk". We have to deal with the challenges and to put the child through two transitions as opposed to one transition, I don't see that as a problem. The specific question I want to ask, there are lots of quotes about the vision, values and aims. These are already being addressed recently, by all schools in the cluster and I attended a meeting where the cluster group were actually talking about having an umbrella vision values and aims. There's great communication between the two schools on many areas. What I wanted to ask specifically, one phrase that keeps on coming up in the document, I'll give you a quote: "establishing a new primary school covering Nursery through to P7 under a single management structure will secure Best Value". I really want to know what that Best Value is because as a parent I think best value is the ratio between head and pupils and at the moment we've got a great ratio. So, please explain what best value is within a new ratio?

FR: Best Value in terms of the Council is ensuring best use of public funding because we are publicly funded. Best Value also means in relation to the provision of Education, so we do feel that a Nursery to P7 provides Best Value in terms of the education that the children will receive and having that continuity and progression in learning.

Question (Member of the public):

I think that this is a really interesting document, I really understand the arguments for it. As interested parent's we're aware of things like early years learning and how important early years are. You've said that you've approached this expert, who has transition experience, both nationally and internationally, and I was wondering what other experts you had approached in other fields across the education spectrum?

FR: We contacted a number of the universities to seek out the experts first, so some of them actually gave us the names of others to communicate with.

The member of public asked a further question:

You asked them for experts on what?

FR: On schooling in terms of the nature of the variety schools, the impact on children in the different schools and also on transitions.

The member of public asked a further question:

But not any other views on transitions?

FR: No, it was in terms of their knowledge of infant schools, junior schools, evidence of attainment within those settings. Those were the sort of areas that we were interested in.

The member of public asked a further question:

But not a focus on early years or where there's different campuses that focus on different parts of the curriculum? As you've said there are very few infant schools to make that comparison nationally.

FR: It was based on what research is there in terms of models elsewhere, on why have we moved to a system where we have Nursery to P7, why is that the reason that we've moved away from having infant and junior schools. Some authorities had an infant school and then a junior school which went to S2 and they've moved away from that. So it was getting information as to why it has moved to that, what would be their evidence based around that, going back to the fact you've got one learning community, one learning environment. We've moved to Curriculum for Excellence that goes from Early Level right the way through. For example, where authorities had junior schools up to S2, which was halfway through a Third Level, they have moved to a Nursery to P7 structure where the average pupil is expected to achieve Second Level by P7. So again partially driven by the curriculum and to enable staff to work together on that progression through Curriculum for Excellence Levels.

Question (Parent, Haddington Infant):

Just looking at the school roll and the fact that the capacity is going to go up, if the Head Teacher is determining how many are in each class what happens about P3/4? Say there's 100 P4's and P3's and the capacity is 30, what happens to the other 10? Do the P4's stay in the Infant School where they're in with P1-3s and their peers are in King's Meadow, or are the P3's brought across to King's Meadow where they would be ahead of their peers? I'm just thinking you're talking a lot about transition but how would that affect the children? Some children might feel left behind, others that they're moving too quickly.

FR: We don't know if composite classes will occur within the new primary school establishment because you can't predict at what age primary children will be coming into the area with all the new build. What we would do is apply the composite class policy. The classes would be constructed using that policy and that's the policy that all of our Head Teachers use. It's only where there are issues over numbers, for example, that it doesn't make a good composite that we would actually look at additional classes. In terms of the building, those are the decisions the Head Teacher would make.

The member of public made a statement:

I'm talking about how you would accommodate that if you didn't have enough classrooms.

FR: We have enough classrooms.

The member of public asked a further question:

If there was going to be a situation where children were in P3/4, there's been a lot of talk about transitions and how that can make children feel, but also if you had to create another classroom is there the capacity within the buildings to do that?

FR: There is capacity within the building for all projected school rolls bearing in mind the schools will be extended anyway. They need to be expanded in terms of Haddington Infant, because of the increasing roll. There is not an issue over capacity. There is a total school roll, whether they come in at P1, P3 or P7, we can't guarantee the numbers. We don't know what the numbers will be. What you do is you work with the Head Teacher in relation to what is currently there, any new families moving into the area and the adjustments that are made, and then the decision would be taken by the Head Teacher and staff in terms of where those classes would be.

The member of public asked a further question:

So there would never be that situation between these two schools?

FR: There could be.

The member of public made a statement:

That's my point, there's a lot of talk about transitions at the moment, it's an actual transition where they are all together, P1-3's and P4-7's but you could have P3's in with P4-7's.

FR: I can't answer that question because it's dependant on the ages of the children and that's no different to any other school across the authority.

The member of public made a further statement:

It is different because if they're in one building, it's not a problem, whereas across two campuses it can make a difference to a child's learning and how they interact with other children.

FB: I'm involved in working with the Head Teachers looking at class organisation and we have quite a number of our primary schools where we have what you'd think of as an infant side and an upper side. So you have your P1-3 at one side of the building and your P4-7 on the other side. When we are looking at it as a whole school, when we know the number of children that are expected in, we look at the legislation. We can't exceed 25 in P1, 30 in P2-3 and 33 in P4-7. On top of that we look at the size of the classrooms as well. In a number of our older schools the classrooms are too small and we can't actually go up to the 33. We do have situations in some of our primaries where you may have a composite P2/3 so some of the P2's who perhaps would have been altogether in one part of the school, some of the P2's are somewhere else in a different play area, a different setting.

Another member of public made a further statement:

It's fair enough to say we don't know if it will happen, but that would have been the situation that my son would have been in if that had happened. If we'd had the single school he would have been potentially in a composite between the two buildings and as a parent of a child in P4, I would not want my child to be in here when all his friends are there, they're having lunch over there, but equally as a parent of a child in P3 you wouldn't want your child to be separated from their friends. I think there has to be some kind of acknowledgement that that could happen, and some sort of policy put in place so that if that does happen, this is what the situation will be because I don't think we can say it won't ever happen.

FR: I don't know if it will happen or not in terms of the school numbers and certainly in terms of each of the stages. The capacity is sufficient enough as it stands but I can't stand here and say it'll never happen because you've seen all the housing developments in the area, families move in. I think in the past few weeks we've had a number of new children moving in and we can't predict their stages.

CW: I think the point, if I understand it, is if you've got a youngster in P3 and the composite would shift the balance of P3s so that 10 of the P3s were in a different building to the rest of the P3s, or if it shifted the other way so that a few of the P4's had to be in the building with the P3's, that's the specific area. The purpose of this Act is for those sorts of questions to be brought up for clarification and the point is that officers can give you answers tonight, but the point is you've asked a specific question and the purpose of the consultation report is to provide that clarification.

The member of public made a statement:

Yes, and it's just there's been a lot of emphasis on transitions, I can't see that being a positive.

CW: That's the specific bit you're asking about and that's the bit that would require clarification.

Another member of public made a further statement (Parent, King's Meadow and Local Authority Head Teacher):

On that P3/4 composite, it would be interesting to know what Dunbar does because they are not just across a pathway as we're talking about. Also, I'm a Head Teacher for the authority and I benefitted from one of the extra classes this year because of a tricky situation I was facing with composites. In negotiation with the authority I was able to say this is going to cause me difficulty, and in the bigger picture, then I was given an extra class. There were 12 extra classes created this year across the authority to address particular issues and that would be where I would reassure parents that that would be discussed at a support meeting.

CW: If the council's happy with that sort of clarification that might be the sort of clarification that might be in the final consultation report. This is not the final consultation report and this is not commitment from officers as to what is going to be in the final consultation report but you've raised that as an issue and there has been some explanation.

Question (Parent, King's Meadow):

My question is about the building and the planned expansion. We're fairly new to Haddington, just 5 years, so I saw the new Haddington Infant building completed and then my son started attending. Was this expansion a plan from then, that there would be necessary planned expansion or is this a new thing, because it seems to me that it's kind of obvious?

FR: No, it's part of the council's duties in terms of developing a Local Development Plan. Every five years they have to submit a Local Development Plan and East Lothian Council went for what we call a compact growth plan, more towards the Musselburgh area. You may have noticed that there tends to be more housing development in that area but there are also other committed and planned housing developments across the whole of the county. This expansion has been in the Local Development plan and that's why we have been undertaking school consultations in this area because some of the new housing development is going to result in a new primary school – Letham Mains Primary School which will be Nursery to P7 and that will be a new school within the Haddington Cluster. The LDP will have a certain impact on school expansion as well as housing developments that already have planning permission and we call these established planned developments. Areas that have already been given planning permission are taken account of in the school roll projections as well as the impact of planned development in relation to the Local Development Plan, which has been approved by the Council, and again that's quite significant because that goes right across the county, so it is planned development.

The member of the public asked a further question:

Is there an indication as to how long that's going to take, the expansion of Haddington Infant School?

Pauline Smith (PS): There is a 'void' in Haddington Infant School which can be fitted out to create two additional classrooms. The projected completion for the work is the end of 2018 and they're looking to have the contractors on site by the summer holidays.

A Local Councillor made a statement (John McMillan):

Any of you who were involved in the Local Development Plan know that it went through a massive consultation process called the Main Issues Report. The LDP has been drafted, the LDP has gone to what's called the Scottish Government Reporters. All of the work on school rolls, on infrastructure, on schools requirements, has been poured over by our planners, by all members of the Council. Officials have done a great deal of work that will be coming back, we believe, from the Scottish reporter this week. It will go to Council so that planning, and it's considerable planning, down to a level of forecasting school rolls, is also subject to really stringent and rigorous robust review. The first summary of that will come out to Council on the 27th February. It will be further sifted, we will accept it and then it goes back, so actually a similar process but in much greater level of granularity and detail. The questions you're asking about forecasting and accommodation for schools have been addressed elsewhere for the whole of the county. I think its work pointing out a level of work has been done, not specifics about P3/4 and composite classes, but there is a huge amount of work that has gone into that Local Development Plan.

Question (Parent, King's Meadow):

You do have other schools in the county that have the infants and the junior school, are you looking to do the same thing with them?

FR: Yes.

Statement (Parent, King's Meadow):

One of my boys has additional support needs. My main concern would be, I understand the budget gets cut every year, and my main concern would be that it would be stretched even more, and we'd have more problems with him getting extra support.

FR: School budgets are not getting cut every year, school budgets always go up and down depending on the school roll and the formula in terms of what we call predictable needs and exceptional needs. Predictable needs is built in to the funding for the school and that covers a certain range of additional support needs. Exceptional needs is more complex and that's where the schools apply for additional funding from the authority. It's a group of staff, senior managers from the authority, from schools, who sit on that panel to determine that exceptional needs funding. I have to say that we at the centre have absorbed most of the savings that have been made in Education without hitting our schools with those efficiency savings, so we have reduced the staffing at the centre in order that the impact has not been felt at school level.

Question (Member of the Public):

Would there be the opportunity then for children with additional support needs who were at the infant school, when the schools merge together, if they were with a specific support person would that support person then go with them from P1-7, which to me would be a huge benefit to children?

FR: Yes, they would be able to and we know that that would be a change for some of the existing staff in the school, but in terms of some of the positives for children that's where it's working well. This is particularly in terms of more vulnerable children who may have attachment issues, children that are often looked after and accommodated, we would see that as a positive in terms of a familiar

face with those children, supporting and understanding their needs as they progress through the school.

Question (Parent, King's Meadow):

In the document it references shared spaces and assembly space, the idea of having a school assembly together. I'm concerned that there isn't a space between the two schools that would have space to play that important role in the school feeling like one place. This is going to be more difficult with the two campuses, not impossible, but more difficult than a school that doesn't have that issue. Do you have any solutions to that?

FR: There are many ways of schools coming together and it's not always about all of the school being there at the same time. You can have stage assemblies, you can have children working together in interdisciplinary learning, so it's about looking at the opportunities that the two schools have in terms of why they want to come together, what's the purpose of them coming together and it may well be that you change that approach. Working with parents, we've spoken before about whether assemblies have to be on Fridays or should there be opportunities for parents to come at other times. If we have different stage assemblies, we can have different stages in the school coming together and that's currently what happens across our school estate at this point in time. Some schools don't have a hall at all and they are one school. They have to find opportunities to come together, for example in a community hall if they want the whole school as one community. We do have accommodation nearby if that was the case, so it's about thinking through the purpose and rationale for coming together to look at different opportunities for that to take place. If there are big events it's no different, for example, in some of our secondary schools they make use of a community facility for events at particular times of the year, for example, celebrations of attainment achievement award evenings. So schools currently are very flexible in how they use, not just the school estate, but also the community provision as well.

Question (Member of the public):

We've talked a lot about how the two buildings are separate, but they are actually quite close physically. You've got the two playgrounds and the gates are locked so that children can't get out into the public. Is there any possibility, if this was to actually happen, to join the two schools with a covered walkway or bridge, so that staff can actually move easily and children could move easily and safely between the two buildings?

FR: To be honest, the children want a tunnel or a bridge and at this point in time we've actually gone back to planning and asked what the possibilities are. We're aware of school estate in another area across Scotland that actually has a bridge that connects the buildings so it's something we can explore because it's certainly something that's come back from the pupils. We're also looking at the change about the gates, where the access is and what we can do in terms of that access. So we are looking at the possibilities on the back of conversations with pupils.

Question (Member of the public):

To what extent do you envisage children moving between the two sites? You've mentioned that staff would move and the benefits of having familiar faces but also in your slide of what makes a good transition the top point was their environment. So if the children are essentially educated P1-3 on one side and P4-7 on a different side, then they still, although it might be one school on paper, have that experience again of having to learn a new building in P4. This would ameliorate any advantage in terms of transition, unless they are regularly moving between the two sites.

FR: Again, that's one of the areas we would be looking at with the school if it is established as one in terms of what the opportunities are within the curriculum. So, for example, would you have P3/4's

working on a common project and could they move either way at different points of the week. As you say, it's separated by a pathway, and it's not impossible for them to be doing that. Then they would be familiar with the different environments that they're working within in terms of buildings. As one community you would be looking for those opportunities as to how you plan learning and assessment and how you plan delivery of the curriculum.

The member of the public asked a further question:

So the idea is there would be a significant amount of movement?

FR: We have to get that in balance, whatever the delivery of the curriculum, there has to be a clear rationale, so why is it they're collaborating and what are the benefits in terms of peer learning. I'm not looking for constant traffic all the time, but what we are saying is that there are opportunities for that to take place. It doesn't mean necessarily that if you're Haddington Infants you are in that building all of the time. We'll explore the opportunities, for example for P7s, as they do in other schools, undertaking reading buddies and there are leadership opportunities. So there are those aspects to be explored as one school and it will be really helpful for the Parent Council, when Helen Gillanders comes to the meeting on the 21st February, where she can share the ideas around that. Even some of our shared headships, we've got new Head Teacher's in post in both the communities that have shared headships and where they've looked at the opportunities that even although they're a few miles away, how they can get children together and how they're working together and sometimes it's not physically moving its using technology. We have, as an authority, been looking at new approaches to technology. We've looked at a new approach to linking classrooms and in some cases we've been using robots. We have new robots now where one class is able to speak to another. Children are able to speak to each other from class to class so there are a variety of ways in which we can be meeting and moving into different buildings, but they don't always necessarily have to do that. It's certainly not going to take away learning time, we want to make best use of that learning time.

Question (Member of the public):

Going back to the point about advantages and you use lots of examples of how you do it in other schools, other schools in East Lothian that are big. You've got other schools that have big school roll. You've got other schools where it's made to work but that doesn't necessarily mean it is better. I don't quite understand why bringing the two schools together would be better than what we have at the moment. Okay they are running separately, I know you focused on the transitions and other people have put it more eloquently than I have about whether or not that's actually as important as you make out. I still at times struggle to see the advantage. All we're seeing is "we do it elsewhere, we make it work" but we don't need to do that here because the status quo works quite well, so demonstrate to us why it's better.

FR: I'll take you back to the school reviews that were undertaken so we currently understand in terms of the areas for improvement that were identified in Haddington Infant and also King's Meadow. As part of these reviews, and at this point in time, those areas for improvement are impacting on children's progress and attainment. When you are saying to me I'm using examples from other schools across the authority, I know that at this point in time looking at some of that provision, the outcomes are better than we are currently seeing here. That might be hard for you to hear at this point in time and I know that has been difficult to hear for staff. The Head Teacher could share with you the Quality Indicator evaluations for the schools now at this moment. The QIs for Haddington Infants are, that have been submitted to the Scottish Government, are satisfactory and for King's Meadow are good. Now at this point in time I'm sure that you would hope that we are working towards provision that's at least good or better moving forward. Looking at it from a picture of the national standard and expectations at this point in time, Haddington Infant School and King's

Meadow would benefit from having Nursery to P7 to improve that whole situation and provision of education of children.

A member of the public made a statement (Parent, Haddington Infant):

I'm possibly the only person in the room who got a bit upset when you said what the pupils want for the common uniform, the colour they want is purple. I find that upsetting. By all means involve the children in decisions like that and get their views once this consultation process has been completed, once we know this is going ahead. You think this might be a good turnout, this is not a good turnout. I wonder perhaps whether pupils are going home saying "we chatted about the new colour of the uniform, it's going to be purple, we decided we want a tunnel". Lots of parents might take some of these comments and think "it's going to happen, they're already asking kids what they want".

CW: The Act says that in taking forward a proposal, because it's about children, the children have to be included. So all the Council is doing is consulting with the children and I guess I can answer for what the Law says. The Law says that Council's must consult with children about proposals and impacts that affect them.

Karen Haspolat (KH): I was the one that spoke to the children in both schools and there was no leading questions at all. Nobody asked them "if there was a new uniform what would you like". Those were the kind of answers they gave and those were the kind of questions they were asking: "would there be a new uniform?". We replied that if the proposal's agreed then that would be something that would be considered and that they would be involved in that. They gave that answer, they were the ones who said they were thinking about purple. It happened in both schools but none of the questions were leading questions.

The member of public made a further statement:

Thank you for your answer. I just think we all need to be a bit mindful of how this topic is generally talked about. Haddington is a small community, it will obviously be bigger, we've talked about that tonight, but I just think that we've got a great document here with lots of great arguments but let's not assume that the outcome is set. I think the language needs to be carefully worded at all public meetings, in all letters, in all communications at all times.

FR: Can I emphasise that I absolutely agree with you about the fact that no decisions have been made. I made it very clear that the two schools are operating as two distinct schools at this point in time in the information going out to parents. We do have an acting Head Teacher arrangement at this point in time. Senior managers met with officers at the centre to determine the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team in both schools, where parents should go if they've got questions and we're making it very clear that these are two distinct schools. It is not for the Education Service to make that decision, it is for the Council to make that decision, however it is for the Education Service to put forward a proposal and if we didn't have a clear educational benefit then we would not meet the duty of the Act.

Question (Member of the public):

Talking about the current attainment levels and impact with transition, in my mind there must be a whole number of variables that impact attainment levels for children in schools. If transition is such a big negative, then surely these two schools would have trailed the others around the county over the many years the schools have existed in this format. You're saying attainment levels in the schools at the moment are bad.

FR: I didn't say it was attainment, what I'm saying is in terms of the Quality Indicators within the National Improvement Framework in which the schools evaluate themselves and are submitted to Scottish Government. Attainment is part of that, yes.

The member of the public made a statement:

If transition is such a negative impact on attainment levels for children, then these two schools should have lagged their peers in attainment over the many years they have been structured like this.

FR: There is capacity for the children to be attaining more.

The member of the public made a further statement:

But there can be any number of factors that can improve that, not just converging them to be suited to one, the Government Education Policy could be impacting on attainment.

FR: There are many factors that affect attainment and I do accept that, staffing for example, but there are other aspects we have been looking at in terms of quality indicators against that national standard. We do know that in terms of the areas that we looked at within the review, there are areas for improvement and they are in terms of the progress of children. There is capacity for the children to be attaining at a higher level. I have been here a year and a half and I can only speak from that perspective. In that time we've undertaken a number of reviews, as we should, as is our duty as a Local Authority. As much as these are challenging messages, the reviews, the quality indicators, the Standard and Quality report, should always be shared with the parental community so there is an understanding of where the school is in terms of its strengths, and there are a significant number of strengths, but also areas of improvement.

The member of the public made a statement:

It's a very basic question. Apart from the transition, which I think we've talked about quite a lot, there doesn't seem to be any evidence that merging the schools will necessarily solve the other problems that may or may not exist. I think the general worry, certainly my worry, is that making a school of 400 to 800 with a smaller senior management team managing that, is actually going to create even more problems.

Statement (Member of the public):

My concern is the cause and correlation, the situation as it is currently and the solution. Is there significant research that supports that that will effect it in a positive way, or could it throw up many more issues that would be more concerning and 10 years down the line we could be saying we should have just kept it the way it was.

Question (Member of the public):

Around transition, you refer to many academic experts, have you actually asked the experts in the room, the parents, what they think the transition process is, positives and negatives. Certainly I've got children in all three schools in Haddington, I've been through the transition stages myself many years ago, and I don't think it's that bad.

FR: Yes, your child may have a positive experience. In the evidence we looked at, there is an assumption that because a child transitions in, we've dealt with all the social and emotional sides of that transition. These are challenging for our children and the researcher is saying that this isn't always as evident. We are adding in an additional transition stage. I accept as someone said earlier that it's appropriate for our children to be challenged, but we are adding in that additional challenge at a very early stage and part way through a Curriculum for Excellence Level.

The member of the public asked a further question:

Are you actually going to engage with the parents? Ultimately we're the sponsors of the school, we're the people who provide children for the school. The teachers do a great job but have you actually engaged our opinion of how that transition process actually works, without just referring to the academic research which isn't necessarily balanced. We are actually the people who are experiencing it on a day to day basis.

FR: And again you have the opportunity to feed that back into this proposal.

CW: From an independent perspective across virtually every school in Scotland, every education authority, every report I can ever remember being written from an HMI perspective, it was certainly arguing that one of the biggest challenges in Scottish Education is transition issues. Largely that was always about primary to secondary and one of the bigger problems was where the secondary schools always believed in a fresh start. Transitions is quite legitimately – not talking about the specific of this particular case – transitions between stages of education is always a challenge and getting it right is a big issue for schools. I'm not talking about specifically this proposal but from experience of many reports that have been written about Scottish Education, certainly in the last 15-20 years I can recall transition was always raised. It was always largely between primary and secondary, and subsidiary to that was stage to stage within schools. Of course what we've got here is an example of an atypical one. It's not common that this transition occurs at a stage of primary school because it's normally happening within a school rather than across schools at primary stage.

A member of the public made a statement:

If transition is a challenge that detrimentally affects education, in this example Haddington Infant School which has come out as satisfactory and King's Meadow Primary School which is good, that's actually bucking the trend because you would expect it to be good to satisfactory. So in Haddington Infants case to King's Meadow, transition is actually benefitting the children. That's just another way of looking at it.

Question (Member of the public):

I've been told that the staff are not to speak to parents about their personal views on the consultation, is that correct, is that the Act?

FR: The staff are employees of the Council, this is a proposal that the Council has put forward. Staff can put in their submission to the Council.

The member of the public asked a further question:

Are they allowed to tell us their personal opinions conversationally?

FR: No, they are officers of the Council.

The member of the public asked a further question:

Is that part of the Act or is that something from the Council?

CW: All teachers are employees of the Council, no matter which Council you're in across Scotland.

The member of the public asked a further question:

And does the Act say that the teachers can't give their personal opinions?

CW: The Act says that teachers should submit their views to the Council.

The member of the public asked a further question:

Can we get the Quality Inspector reports?

FR: Do you mean the school reviews?

The member of the public made a statement:

Yes.

FR: They were done in 2016 and were shared with the Parent Council at that point in time in terms of high level data from the findings. The Quality Indicators for each school should be reported within your 2016 Standard and Quality Report.

The member of the public made a further statement:

I thought it was more recent than that.

FR: Each of those Quality Indicator's has been submitted to the Scottish Government. Staff are working incredibly hard in both schools, but in terms of the areas for improvement that have been identified, as an authority and a with duty to improve education, the Scottish Government are now looking for the actions we are taking in relation to schools that are not good or better.

Chris Webb thanked those in attendance, thanked officers for their time and brought the meeting to a close.