

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Borders Council to permanently close Eddleston Primary School and rezone its catchment area to either Newlands Primary School or Kingsland Primary School.

February 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from HMIE has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by Scottish Borders Council to permanently close Eddleston Primary School and rezone its catchment area to either Newlands Primary School or Kingsland Primary School. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers. There are special provisions that apply to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and 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 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 21 January 2026 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 site of Kingsland Primary School, Newlands Primary School and Peebles High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Eddleston Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 Scottish Borders Council took the decision to mothball the school in June 2022, following the school roll falling to four children. The catchment area was rezoned to Newlands Primary School on a temporary basis. The school has remained mothballed since this time. The council undertook pre-consultation and engagement with the local community and published an Options Appraisal as part of their second Mothball Status Review Report 2025. The statutory consultation to close Eddleston Primary School ran from 8 December 2025 to 13 February 2026. The council published the proposal papers on its website, social media platforms and local press. It also made copies available to stakeholders and through various council offices.

2.3 The council held a public meeting on 21 January 2026, which had 18 attendees. Stakeholders raised a range of questions seeking clarity on the statutory consultation process, the rationale for the proposed rezoning and projected pupil numbers. They also queried transport arrangements and the future use of the school building. The council received 47 responses to its consultation. Respondents had mixed views on the council's proposal to close Eddleston Primary School, with 20 agreeing, 16 disagreeing and 11 unsure. Those in favour highlighted the challenges with low pupil numbers and the educational benefits of larger peer groups. Those opposed highlighted the school's importance to village identity and expressed the benefits of being able to walk or cycle to a village school. Preferences for rezoning also varied, with respondents identifying benefits of attending both Newlands and Kingsland Primary Schools, whilst a few requested a broader choice of schools or a split catchment area.

2.4 The council also met with 34 children from Kingsland, Newlands and Priorsford Primary Schools, most of whom live in the Eddleston area. All children understood their rights and the relevance of their views to the consultation. They expressed mixed views about the proposal. Children recognised the limitations of very small pupil numbers and the benefits of larger settings for social and learning experiences. Children strongly emphasised the importance of preserving access to the existing playground as a key community resource. Views on future catchment options also varied, with pupils identifying advantages in both village and town schools.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Scottish Borders Council proposes to permanently close Eddleston Primary School and rezone its catchment area to Newlands Primary School or Kingsland Primary School depending on the views it receives from members of the community. It recognises that the majority of parents with primary-aged children, living in Eddleston Primary School's original catchment area, are choosing to attend other schools in Tweeddale and Peeblesshire. The council sets out comprehensive educational benefits statements for both options in relation to educational outcomes, learning experiences and opportunities for collaboration and social interaction. HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits for the children attending Newlands and Kingsland Primary Schools.

3.2 Both Eddleston and Newlands Primary Schools are classified as accessible rural schools. Before mothballing, Eddleston pupils were part of a learning community with Newlands, sharing a headteacher and forming strong relationships across both schools. The council believes permanently aligning the catchment with Newlands would build on these connections and strengthen links between the two areas. Alternatively, the council highlight that Kingsland Primary School, with its larger catchment, could offer children a wider peer group, more varied learning experiences, and richer social interaction. A larger staff and parent body could support a broader curriculum and provide more opportunities in sports, health and wellbeing, and creative arts. Transition to secondary school may also be strengthened with a larger cohort.

3.3 All of the children, young people, parents, staff and community members that spoke with HM Inspectors support the council's proposal to discontinue education at Eddleston Primary School. The majority of parents, community members and a few staff want to see the school reopen, but feel it is not practical. They expressed sadness about the loss of a valuable community asset, which they believe provided a focal point for the village. All children expressed the importance of retaining the football field, which they currently use.

3.4 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree that children are settled in their respective schools and enjoy their educational experiences. Children from Eddleston attending Newlands Primary are able to describe the benefits that a smaller rural school can bring. They are developing skills and attributes to meet their individual needs in a rural context. Equally, children from Eddleston attending Kingsland Primary School describe the benefits of attending a larger school. They too are developing skills and attributes from rich learning experiences and enjoy the social aspects of bigger friendship groups. As a result, stakeholders expressed opposing views about which primary school the catchment area for Eddleston Primary School should be rezoned to.

3.5 Almost all stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors agree it is important that the council protects the future sustainability of rural schools, where appropriate. They agree that permanently rezoning the catchment area to Newlands Primary School could protect the viability of the school. However, a few parents firmly believe that the catchment area should be rezoned to Kingsland Primary School. A few stakeholders, including parents and community members, suggest that the council should consider a third option, which would be to split the Eddleston Primary School catchment area between both Newlands and Kingsland Primary Schools. It will be important that the council continues to liaise with stakeholders to consider their views on how a split catchment may work.

3.6 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. As part of the options appraisal, the council considered a range of factors. The council's proposal considers four options: to reinstate Eddleston Primary School with its original catchment area; to reinstate the school and expand its catchment area; to continue to mothball the school with the catchment area zoned to Newlands Primary School; and to permanently close Eddleston Primary School and re-zone the catchment area to either Newlands Primary School or Kingsland Primary School. The council have set out the reasons for their preferred option clearly in the proposal. HM Inspectors agree with the conclusions set out in the proposal regarding the educational benefits in the current context.

3.7 A key consideration for the council is the increased travel distance for children. This includes those living in Eddleston village and those living to the north of the catchment. The council currently provides transport to eligible children attending Newlands Primary School. The council outlines that the distance from Eddleston Primary School to Newlands Primary School is 12 miles and takes approximately 17 minutes. Whereas the distance from Eddleston Primary School to Kingsland Primary School is 5.2 miles and takes approximately 13 minutes. HM Inspectors do not believe either of these to be excessive for primary aged children, should the council proceed with the proposal. Whatever option the council agrees, it should ensure the continuity of learning for all children and their siblings. It should consider ensuring that siblings can attend the same school to mitigate against extra time needed for parents to manage multiple drop offs.

3.8 The council has given due consideration to the likely effect on the local community. It has continued to engage with Eddleston Community Council to consider the future use of the mothballed school, including the potential for community asset transfer. All stakeholders believe that the school and grounds should be used for future community benefit. The community representatives that spoke with HM Inspectors have clear plans about how they may repurpose the building in the future and hope to take ownership of the building, should it close as a school. In its proposal paper the council have outlined the potential of the building to be used temporarily by Live Borders to house a museum collection from Chambers Institution. This should help to ensure that the building does not fall further into disrepair.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits arising from the council's proposal. Children from Eddleston catchment can continue to benefit from curriculum design that supports their learning in schools across Tweeddale and Peeblesshire. All children are settled in their current settings namely, Newlands and Kingsland Primary Schools and enjoy their educational experiences. In considering reasonable alternatives, the council considered a range of factors and HM Inspectors agree there are potential educational benefits for both options outlined in the proposal. Should the proposal proceed, it will be important for the council to continue to work closely with the wider local community to consider their views, including the suggestion of splitting the catchment area across both Newlands and Kingsland Primary Schools. In moving forward with the proposal, the council should ensure the continuity of learning for all children and consider the potential implications for families, including additional travel. The council should also continue to work with local community groups to consider community asset transfer timeously if they decide to close the school.

HM Inspectors
February 2026

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