

**PE1486/C**

**Midlothian Council Reply to Questions regarding Petition PE1486**

**Q1:** What are your views on the issues raised in the petition?

In our view, any further changes to class sizes should be resisted until an assessment of the impact of the recent reduction in P1 maximum class size to 25 pupils has been undertaken.

A class size limit of 20 for P1 combined with other class size limits of 30 for P2 & P3 and 33 for P4 to P7 would make it even more challenging to accommodate pupils within our existing school estate. It is also likely to increase the number of class reformations that pupils experience during their time at primary school, which, in general, we view as detrimental to learning and teaching.

**Q2:** To what extent do you agree that parents should have a statutory right to place siblings together in their chosen school?

We do not favour giving additional statutory rights to parents to select the school at which their children will be educated as it would, in our view, undermine the ability of the Education Authority to get it right for every child.

We do not agree that parents should have a statutory right to place siblings together in their chosen school, as this would allocate school places to the siblings of non-catchment pupils ahead of catchment pupils.

In our view, if consideration is to be given to introducing additional statutory rights, the right to be placed in one's catchment school, should be given precedence, in order to protect communities' entitlement to places at their catchment school.

**Q3:** Please set out how policies are applied in your area in relation to pupil admissions and how certain factors such as catchment area and sibling placing requests are prioritised?

A 'whole school' approach is taken when deciding on the size of the P1 intake, based on the working capacity of each school, e.g.

- a 4 class school, which has a total working capacity of 100 pupils, has a P1 intake maximum of 14 pupils.
- a 7 class school, which has a total working capacity of 175 pupils, has a P1 maximum intake of 25 pupils.

Children living in Midlothian are given priority over children living outside Midlothian;

Children living within the school catchment area are given priority over those living outside the catchment area;

Children who will have a sibling attending the primary school in that year are given priority over those who do not;

The shortest safe walking distance from home to school is normally used to decide priority within each of these categories.

**Q4:** In your area what is the criteria used to decide on class sizes and what are the constraints to increase the number of classes?

The criteria used to decide on class sizes in Midlothian include:

Maximum class sizes, which are currently:

25 children for Primary 1

30 children for Primary 2 & 3

33 children for Primary 4 to 7

25 children for composite classes

The number of available classrooms/teaching spaces in the school

The size of the classrooms/teaching spaces, i.e. the number of children who can be physically accommodated in these spaces.

The constraints on increasing the number of classes include the cost of additional teachers to staff a greater number of classes and the lack of available teaching spaces in many of our schools.