

Consultation proposal by South Lanarkshire Council

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal to relocate Hollandbush Nursery from Mill Road, Hamilton to Irvine Terrace, Hamilton.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

Introduction

- 1.1 South Lanarkshire Council proposes to relocate Hollandbush Nursery from Mill Road, Hamilton to Irvine Terrace, Hamilton in a new, purpose-built facility.
- 1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.
- 1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:
 - 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;
 - consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
 - visits to the site of Hollandbush Nursery and the proposed new site, including discussion with relevant consultees.
- 1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the nursery; 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 South Lanarkshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. The consultation included an invitation for written submissions and a public meeting, held in June 2013.

2.2 Overall, almost all those consulted welcomed this proposal which would result in a new, purpose built facility in a central location near the current nursery.

2.3 Parents had a very positive view about the quality of education provided by the staff team. They valued the staff team highly and praised their success in providing children with a high-quality educational experience. Parents were looking for reassurances that the proposed facilities would enable these standards to be maintained and extended. They highlighted staff's skill in providing children with challenging and enjoyable learning experiences. Parents had concerns that the proposal might lead to open-plan play areas which may not be as helpful to staff in managing children's learning and progress.

2.4 The headteacher and staff of Hollandbush Nursery School were in favour of the proposal. The current school building is well maintained and provides a stimulating learning environment for all children. However, staff recognise that the building is in need of some improvement. The cloakroom is small and becomes very congested at key times during the day. The staffroom does not have sufficient seating capacity for all staff to use it at the same time. A playroom has to be dismantled for events such as assemblies, concerts and meetings of parents. Staff indicated their preference for the new facility to have individual playrooms to help them maintain and enhance the current high-quality standard of education. They also expressed concern at any possible reduction in the size of playrooms. Parents and staff requested that the new facility provide improved parking for pick-up and drop-off of children. Staff requested clearer clarification that the proposed facility would address these issues. They also would like active involvement in planning the new accommodation.

2.5 All those consulted feel that the proposal will lead to better opportunities for children to be independent in accessing outdoor play. At present, while there are special features to the design of the outdoor facilities, not all playrooms have free access to these.

2.6 All those consulted recognised that the existing nursery enables them to have the space and facilities to work with parents and external agencies to support the health and wellbeing of children. Particular reference was made to the dedicated accommodation for supporting parenting skills and the programmes for home-school development of literacy and numeracy skills. It was viewed as very desirable for the proposed accommodation to facilitate these approaches.

2.7 The headteacher has indicated that there are no community users of the premises who will be affected by the proposal.

2.8 Children were encouraged to express their opinions on the proposals using age-appropriate methods. Children were able to say what they liked about the nursery. As yet, their understanding of the proposal was limited. They will, however continue to be involved in the proposed move.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Hollandbush Nursery is an established facility providing early education in the community. It is not aligned to any catchment area and has a capacity for up to 160 children over two sessions. The current arrangements for admission would continue. Hollandbush Nursery's accommodation and grounds are well-maintained. The playrooms and outdoor playing area are spacious and afford a wide-range of opportunities for learning through play. The council's proposal is based on its commitment to modernising facilities. The council conducted an assessment of possible sites for relocation which included how well sites linked to transport routes. From this, the proposed site was identified as the most appropriate for the new location of the nursery. The proposal would enable children to continue to access early years educational provision in a more modern facility.

3.2 The move to new and purpose built accommodation will bring clear educational benefit. It will benefit the children and their parents who are likely to use the nursery within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper. The current users of the nursery will not be affected. However, the educational benefit statement given by the authority is based on the scope to significantly enhance children's learning experiences within a stimulating learning environment. In taking forward the proposal, the council's final consultation report needs to set out how this will be achieved. The proposal also needs to specify more clearly how the accommodation will be suitable for a full range of purposes linked to the delivery of the curriculum at Hollandbush Nursery. This includes to enable the continuation of the work on the *Early Years Framework* and *Getting it right for every child*.

3.3 During the consultation, stakeholders also raised legitimate concerns about traffic management issues. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to work closely with those consulted to reassure them and address these issues.

4. Summary

4.1 The proposal from South Lanarkshire Council to build a new nursery on a site near the current nursery school is of clear educational benefit and should have a positive impact on children's educational experiences. It will offer more modern and up-to-date accommodation for learning. The council needs to include more specific detail in its final consultation report to demonstrate how the new facility would continue to secure high-quality education. The council also needs to ensure ongoing communication and involvement in planning to continue to build on stakeholders' confidence in the proposal, particularly in addressing concerns with regard to traffic management.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
September 2013**