

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to relocate Bothwellpark High School to the Edward Lawson Centre.

December 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her 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 North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to relocate Bothwellpark High School to the Edward Lawson Centre. 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' 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 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 final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school;
- 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 online on 19 October 2021 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 Bothwellpark High School and Edward Lawson Centre including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 27 September 2021 until 16 November 2021. The consultation proposal was made available to members of the public and published on the council website. The council created a Frequently Asked Questions document which was also published on the website. Taking account of public health concerns, the council held a virtual public meeting on the 19 October 2021. The council accepted questions up to two days before the public meeting. This was to include better those who may have been prevented from offering their view at the public meeting.

2.3 The public meeting was attended by nine members of the public, the local councillor and a Member of the Scottish Parliament. Officers from North Lanarkshire Council shared a presentation offering further information on the proposal and included the council's view of educational benefits.

Officers committed to answering a number of questions after the presentation. Stakeholders requested additional information on what transport arrangements had been considered for children and young people if the school relocates. Council officers explained that transportation would remain the same as currently offered. Additionally, stakeholders requested reassurance that the facilities would be modern and that a high quality refurbishment of the Edward Lawson Centre would be undertaken. They sought assurances that there was enough space in the proposed building to accommodate the proposed three educational provisions, if the proposal is successful. The council advised that the building offers significant flexibility when designing internal and external spaces.

2.4 Five written submissions were received during the consultation period. A majority of these submissions communicated concern surrounding the reduction in space available at the proposed new location. All responses shared concern over security and road safety at the proposed new location. The council surveyed pupils from Bothwellpark High School and St Aidan's Language Communication Support Centre (LCSC). Sixteen pupils responded to the survey. Almost all pupils had the opportunity to speak with someone about the proposal. Almost all pupils like the school building where they are currently educated. A majority of pupils want to continue their education in their current school location. The council held additional meetings, to gather the views of Bothwellpark High School staff members and parent council members on 19 November 2021.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 North Lanarkshire Council set out a number of potential educational benefits in the proposal to relocate Bothwellpark High School to the Edward Lawson Centre. The council identifies that a larger indoor space is required for children and young people. This is to better meet the range of complex needs and for young people who require support with mobility. The current location of the school provides appropriate classroom size and communal spaces. It offers suitable flexibility to provide support, learning and teaching. However, classrooms in the current location are located over a ground floor and an upper floor. The upper floor is accessible through communal stairwells or a lift. Of concern, the lift is in a poor state of repair and is not currently in use. This significantly impacts upon young people accessing the upper floor classrooms and resources. In contrast, the proposed new location has one ground floor with no upper levels. This has the potential to significantly improve accessibility of classroom spaces, common areas and access to the outdoors. However, of note, the overall internal space available in the proposed location is not larger than the current school location.

3.2 It is not yet clearly identified how the proposed new location will be designed to include the range of specialist equipment required to meet the needs of young people. In order for the proposed new location to provide a sufficient number of classrooms for young people, there will be a reduction in classroom sizes, when compared to current classroom sizes. For a minority of young people, a smaller classroom size has the potential to restrict independent movement around the class or when using mobility aids. Therefore, in relation to high-quality facilities, it is not yet clear how young people with a range of complex needs will fully benefit from the proposed relocation. If the proposal is accepted, it is important that the council utilise the expertise of Bothwellpark Secondary School staff and appropriate allied health professionals when designing internal school spaces.

3.3 In the introduction section of the proposal, the council categorises the existing Bothwellpark Secondary School building as C for suitability. The proposed new location, if redeveloped to have high-quality indoor and outdoor facilities, has potential to improve the overall suitability of the school building and culture of learning and teaching.

3.4 A singly storey floor plan is welcome within the proposed new location. However, there remains a number of concerns in ensuring the range of education activity that can be offered there. There are no identifiable flexible spaces in the proposed new location to offer curriculum subject specialist facilities such as expressive arts, sciences, technologies or life skills. In the Frequently Asked Questions document published on the council website, the council states that it will explore the development of a gym hall space if the proposal is approved. This is not a sufficient commitment in ensuring an essential physical education space is available to all young people attending Bothwellpark Secondary School. When considering the complexity of needs of children, outdoor spaces for physical education are not always appropriate.

3.5 It is unclear how the council plan to accommodate space for the important work of visiting specialists, such as allied health professionals or educational psychologists. Young people attending Bothwellpark Secondary School have multiple, severe and complex needs. To meet young people's needs requires careful planning and highly individualised supports. If the proposal is to progress, it is important that the council continues with its plans to involve key stakeholders in the design of the school. In doing so, there is potential to improve current working practices and enhance spaces where young people can access specialised support.

3.6 The current school location offers a secure and well-designed forest schools area. This area is popular with young people and has walking paths, seats and firepits. Additionally, there is a suitable, secure and large flat playground area. This area has several trampolines, a large wooden classroom zone and a large polytunnel for growing plants and food. The large flat playground area is used effectively for a range of physical activity. A smaller playground, located closer to the rear school entrance, provides young people with a valuable, safe and secure zone to relax and interact. There is a good sized garden to the front of the school designed for growing food or plants and promotes relaxation. If well-planned, the proposed new location at Edward Lawson Centre has potential to develop outdoor spaces that will further enhance learning, teaching and wellbeing. However, significant ground works will be required to provide safe, secure and high-quality outdoor spaces matching what young people can access at their current location.

3.7 Educational benefits statements 4.1.6 through 4.1.9 relate to the potential of having three separate education provisions located within the Edward Lawson Centre. In addition to Bothwellpark Secondary School, the proposal is to collocate two other specialist provisions. The children attending each of the potential education provisions will have varying levels of additional support needs. It is unlikely that there will be transition pathways between the provisions for almost all children and young people. Therefore, it is not clear that the proposal offers educational benefits to children and young people beyond what they already experience in their current location.

3.8 The planned proposal creates some apprehension for stakeholders. HM Inspectors share the concern of stakeholders about identified areas for delivering physical education within the proposed interior development. The internal space with high ceilings is identified for the early years provisions. This means that there is no suitable space with a high ceiling for refurbishment remaining for Bothwellpark High School. The council need to take account of this in any future refurbishment designs.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits for young people accessing a modern, purpose designed learning environment with appropriate facilities, including improved accessibility. However, the council should provide more reassurance to stakeholders as to the potential educational benefits of relocating the current Bothwellpark to Edward Lawson Centre. If the proposal is to progress, it is imperative that young people are not disadvantaged in the design

of classroom spaces or other learning areas. For example, in the current school location, there are appropriate spaces designed to provide vocational skills, outdoor learning, physical education, sensory relaxation and academic learning. It is also important to consider how the new location can accommodate a meaningful space where young people can interact and celebrate their school successes. As a minimum, it is therefore important that young people can access high-quality learning and teaching spaces in line with their current educational offer.

HM Inspectors recommend that more detailed planning is undertaken and shared with stakeholders prior to a final decision on the proposal. Planning should clearly outline how many classroom spaces are allocated for general classroom learning and teaching and what will be provided in terms of subject specialist classrooms. Additionally, it is important that rooms are identified for visiting specialists to use in order to provide their individualised specialist support and to protect the dignity of young people. For outdoor spaces, it is important to inform stakeholders how roads and car parks around the school will be redeveloped to improve safety and provide opportunities for improved outdoor learning experiences. The council should ensure the proposed new location has an appropriate space for young people to engage with physical education. If the proposal is accepted, the council should continue with its ambitious plans, involving key stakeholders, to design high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments.

**HM Inspectors
December 2021**