

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to establish a new additional support needs stage at Loanhead Primary School.

June 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland 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 Midlothian Council to establish a new additional support needs (ASN) stage at Loanhead 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the school; 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 7 May 2025 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
- visit to the site of Loanhead Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council undertook the statutory consultation from 2 April to 2 June 2025. The proposal paper was published on the council's website and provided to key stakeholders. The council made copies of the proposal paper in public buildings or in alternative formats upon request. The council held a public meeting in Loanhead Primary School, which four members of the public attended. At the meeting council representatives outlined the consultation process and the proposals, and answered questions raised by member of the public. The council received 114 responses to its online survey. The majority of respondents agreed with the proposal to establish an ASN stage at Loanhead Primary School. The majority of respondents also agreed that the leadership of the ASN

stage should be under the headteacher of Loanhead Primary School. Those supportive of the proposal noted the increased need for ASN provision to help children who require additional support. Those not in favour expressed concern of the potential disruption to the learning experiences of children in the mainstream provision. A significant minority of respondents do not believe that the ASN stage should be placed under the leadership of the headteacher of Loanhead Primary School.

2.3 The council engaged with a sample of children from the ASN provision and the mainstream school. Children highlighted positive aspects of the school and ASN provision being led with one headteacher. This included children from both settings getting to know each other better. However, they also expressed a few concerns about the potential impact of negative behaviours.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Loanhead Primary School shares a campus with the former St Margaret's Primary School. In 2021, when St Margaret's Primary School closed, the building was used to host children with social emotional and behavioural needs from Hawthornden Provision and Treehouse Provision (Gore Glen Primary School). This proposal will formalise the previous arrangement. Hawthornden and Gore Glen Primary Schools will also continue to accommodate children with ASN.

3.2 The council has set out educational benefits to establish a permanent ASN stage for primary aged children at Loanhead Primary School. This ASN stage will be under the leadership of the headteacher of Loanhead Primary School. HM Inspectors agree there are potential educational benefits to this proposal. This is required to expand and improve the range and quality of support available. The council argues that these changes are required to meet the increasing demand for ASN provision. This includes children on a shared placement who already spend part of their week in Loanhead Primary School from their catchment school. Currently there are 16 children accessing this provision.

3.3 Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors at Loanhead Primary School agree with the proposal. Children from mainstream and the ASN stage would welcome the opportunity to participate in more joint activity. They believe that this will help them to socialise and form more friendships. They spoke positively on the importance of being inclusive and understood that children learn at different paces and in different ways. Children from the mainstream provision want their equipment and learning environment to be treated with respect. They felt that more could be done to improve this across the school.

3.4 Staff expressed the need to have a more consistent approach to promoting positive relationships across both settings. They felt that whole school approaches are important, including having shared values. A few staff expressed concerns over security and the use of shared spaces. Although they noted a decrease in the number of incidents involving children from the ASN stage, they shared concerns about the potential negative impact of children attending mainstream classes. This includes the perceived loss of outdoor space to support learning and teaching. All support staff felt they would benefit from additional training to deal with challenging behaviour safely. They would value an increase in the use of restorative approaches to support positive relationships with children and staff. A few staff noted concerns relating to any increase in responsibilities for the leadership and management of the school. The council should continue with plans to provide career long professional learning for all staff to ensure they have the required skills to support all children effectively.

3.5 If the council proceeds with the proposal, it is the view of HM Inspectors that the current school environment requires adaptations to meet the needs of all children. There is a need for the council to ensure that the educational benefits as outlined in the proposal reflect the educational

experiences for all children attending the ASN stage. The council should be clearer about enhancements that are required to ensure children have access to necessary resources or adapted environments which they require. HM Inspectors recommend that the council should work with staff to provide appropriate resources to help children with their sensory needs or access to high quality therapeutic interventions.

3.6 During the consultation period the council identified an inaccuracy within its original proposal. The council rectified this before the end of the consultation period.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits to this proposal. Loanhead Primary School has the capacity to accommodate the ASN stage. This will help the council meet the increasing demand for ASN provision. If the council proceeds with the proposal, it should be clearer about the enhancements required to support children to learn and grow. HM Inspectors believe that the school environment requires adaptations to meet all children's needs. This includes ensuring that the stated educational benefits outlined in the proposal reflects the experiences for children attending the ASN stage. It will be important that the council continues to work with staff to address their concerns and provide appropriate professional learning to ensure they have the required skills to support all children effectively. This includes providing appropriate professional learning and resources to better support children in the ASN stage and access to high quality therapeutic interventions.

HM Inspectors
June 2025