

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 (ASN) stage at Mayfield Primary School on the new Mayfield Learning Community Campus and close the Speech and Language Communication provision within Mayfield Primary School.

May 2024

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 Mayfield Primary School on the new Mayfield Learning Community Campus and close the Speech and Language Communication provision within Mayfield 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the setting; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people 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 17 April 2024 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 Mayfield 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 consultation ran from 6 March until 3 May 2024. The council made the consultation paper available via its website. Paper copies were also available by request and from Mayfield Primary School, Newbattle Community Campus library and Midlothian House. A public meeting was held on 17 April 2024, which seven 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 local authority received 60 responses to its online survey. It engaged with a sample of pupils from Mayfield Primary School and parents of nursery aged children that are likely to attend the newly established ASN stage. Almost all respondents were in favour of establishing a new ASN stage at Mayfield Primary School. The majority of respondents agreed that leadership of the ASN stage should be under the headteacher of Mayfield Primary School. Most respondents were not in favour of closing the speech and language communication provision (SLCP).

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree that the closure of the SLCP and the move to providing only outreach support to children has potential educational benefits. At the time of HM Inspectors visiting the school, a very low number of children attended the SLCP. All children had appropriate transition plans to return to their mainstream schools, with support. From August 2024, the proposal aims to have SLCP staff providing only outreach support to children in their local schools. This has potential for SLCP staff to build further capacity in mainstream schools across the local authority in meeting the needs of children requiring support with their speech, language and communication skills. Therefore, the local authority will increase its capacity to meet national expectations of the presumption of mainstreaming. Children with speech, language and communication needs will therefore be less likely to require specialist placement away from their local school. For any children who do require a specialist placement, the local authority should continue to meet their needs through robust assessment processes and allocation of placements, as appropriate.

3.2 Stakeholders, that HM Inspectors spoke with, stated that they are concerned that the closure will result in a loss of additional support for children with speech, language and communication needs. The local authority should work with stakeholders to ensure that they fully understand how children with speech, language and communication needs will continue to have their additional support needs met.

3.3 For children requiring additional support for severe and complex needs, HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits for establishing a new ASN stage at the new Mayfield Learning Community Campus. The new community campus, expected to be completed in December 2025, provides a modern, purposefully designed and spacious school environment for children with ASN. The new community campus offers flexibility to meet a range of additional support needs including increasing opportunities for children to directly access the outdoors from their classroom to the school grounds. Architectural drawings of the new community campus show that all classrooms are on the same level. Therefore, the design of the new community campus has potential to increase children's accessibility and inclusion in a range of mainstream school activities and community facilities.

3.4 HM Inspectors agree that the new ASN Stage at the community campus will provide appropriate learning areas for up to 48 children with a range of additional support needs. The new ASN stage also has potential to support the local authority to meet the projected increase in the needs of children within the local authority requiring specialist support.

3.5 If the council agrees to move forward with the proposal to establish a new ASN stage, children will begin to access the new ASN stage from August 2024. It is the view of HM Inspectors that the current Mayfield Primary School environment requires adaptations to meet all children's needs and to provide a high-quality learning environment. There is a need for the local authority to ensure that the educational benefits as outlined in the consultation reflect the educational experiences for any children attending the ASN stage from August 2024. For example, there is a need to improve facilities for children with mobility aids or for children who require intimate care.

HM Inspectors recommend that the local authority should work with staff to consider how to improve opportunities for children to have secure access to the outdoors. It should work with staff to provide appropriate resources to help children with their sensory needs or access to therapeutic interventions.

3.6 During the consultation the council identified an omission within its original proposal. The council rectified this before the end of the consultation period. It determined that the indicator determining the Grant Aided Expenditure allocation for Special Education is the population aged between two and 19. The pupils from the SLCP attending a different setting within the council would not affect this indicator.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential educational benefits for children with additional support needs across the local authority. In moving the SLCP to an outreach model, there is potential for more children to receive the right support at the right time within their mainstream schools. This will help the local authority to meet the national requirements of the presumption of mainstreaming. The new ASN stage hosted in the Mayfield Community Campus will support the local authority in meeting the projected increase of children with a range and complexity of additional support needs. The new facilities have the potential to offer improved learning opportunities across the community campus.

HM Inspectors
May 2024