

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to relocate Hopefield Nursery School to Blackburn Primary School.

November 2022

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 West Lothian Council's proposal to relocate Hopefield Nursery School to Blackburn 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' 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 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 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 26 October 2022 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 sites of Hopefield Nursery, Blackburn Primary School and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 12 September 2022 until 4 November 2022. A public meeting took place on 26 October 2022 in Blackburn Primary School. Five members of staff from Blackburn and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary Schools attended the meeting. No parents were in attendance. Members of the public were encouraged to respond to the consultation by email, either to the address given on the council website or directly to the Head of Education. Only one written response was received.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council believes that the relocation of Hopefield Nursery to Blackburn Primary School will support continuity and progression in children's learning. It will help ease the transition from nursery to primary one as both will be located within the same building. For those children moving to Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, HM Inspectors are confident that the strong relationships between the two primary schools should facilitate a smooth transition. The accommodation for the new nursery is far superior to the existing provision at Hopefield Nursery and should provide a rich learning environment for children attending. The new facilities are more flexible, allowing multi-use for staff and children. The current registered capacity at Hopefield Nursery is 35 with no capacity for eligible two year olds. Moving to the new facility will allow an increase in capacity to 53 with provision of ten places for eligible two year olds. This should support a requirement in Blackburn for an eligible two year old provision.

3.2 The council sees additional educational benefit in encouraging high quality outdoor play. Whilst this facility already exists at Hopefield Nursery and is well used, the provision at the new facility is accessible and attractive. There is also potential for additional outdoor space at Blackburn Primary School to be utilised by the nursery. However, there is some anxiety amongst nursery staff that as the new outdoor space is smaller it may limit children's experiences. Care should be taken by the council to ensure that the views of nursery staff who transfer to the new facility are considered.

3.3 All stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors or responded in writing are in agreement with the proposals. The existing nursery building is outdated and a new facility is welcomed. Stakeholders are keen that the new nursery continues to be named Hopefield and the council have confirmed the name of the facility to be Blackburn Primary School and Hopefield Nursery Class. A few questions were asked by parents and staff about the future of the existing building once vacated. However, at this stage there are no plans in place for its future use. Children who spoke to HM Inspectors are very positive about the proposals, as are parents. No concerns regarding educational benefits were raised with HM Inspectors. Existing nursery staff transferring to the new nursery did express some concern regarding parking at Blackburn Primary School, which is limited. A few parents are also worried about dropping-off children in the immediate area due to congestion at busy times. Whilst the council is not obliged to provide parking for staff, due regard should be given to any safety concerns regarding dropping-off children once the new nursery is open.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to bring clear educational benefits for the children attending Hopefield Nursery in the coming years. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to work with parents and staff to ensure a smooth transition to the new building.

HM Inspectors
November 2022