

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to close Cameron House Nursery.

January 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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to close Cameron House Nursery. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school or setting, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including 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 their families of the setting; any other users; and other children and families 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 29 November 2023 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Cameron House Nursey and Prestonfield Nursery, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 13 November until 22 December 2023. A public meeting took place on 29 November 2023 and was attended by one member of the public and officers from The City of Edinburgh Council. The consultation paper was made available to the public via the council website. Leaflets were also distributed to local homes adjacent to the nursery building and to Prestonfield Primary School and Nursery. Posters and consultation papers were delivered to Newington Library and Cameron House Community Centre. Direct emails were sent to the parent

council at Prestonfield Primary School, Grange/Prestonfield Community Council and local nurseries.

2.3 The council received three email responses to the consultation regarding the closure of the nursery. One respondent agreed with the proposal and two others disagreed.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In their proposal, the council states that there will be no change to nursery provision in the area as a result of the permanent closure of Cameron House Nursery. The nursery closed in 2019 due to pending building works. At this time, there were only four children registered for a nursery place and they moved to the nearby Prestonfield Nursery. HM Inspectors agree that Prestonfield Nursery provides a more modern and accessible building than Cameron House Nursery would be likely to provide if it were to reopen. In its final proposal, it would be helpful for the council to provide a fuller educational benefits statement to support stakeholders to better understand the positives to this proposed closure.

3.2 All the parents HM Inspectors met at Prestonfield Nursery, had experience of the provision at Cameron House Nursery. Parents were happy with the current nursery at Prestonfield. However, they do not agree with the rationale for the council's proposal to permanently close the building and feel that it is a loss to the local community. They think that the small capacity of Cameron House Nursery was helpful in meeting the individual needs of children, in particular those with additional support needs.

3.3 Staff at Prestonfield Nursery who met HM Inspectors have concerns about the overall provision of nursery places in the Prestonfield area. They stated that this would be the second closure in the area. In its proposal the council states there is no significant housing developments planned in the Prestonfield area, and they predict that the current nursery provision in the area is sufficient.

3.4 Stakeholders would value more information on the future of the building should this proposal be agreed. Since its temporary closure its condition has deteriorated. Stakeholders would like to see the site be retained for community use.

3.5 During the consultation period consultees identified alleged inaccuracies in the proposal relating to the numbers of children registered at Cameron House Nursery prior to its closure. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address these.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the current arrangements provide nursery provision in buildings that are more modern and accessible than could likely be provided at Cameron House. Stakeholders have concerns about the future of the building. If this proposal is agreed the council should consult with local people about its use, including whether it can be developed as a community facility. In its final consultation report, the council should outline more fully the educational benefits and set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it.

HM Inspectors
January 2024