

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to close Linlithgow Bridge Nursery Class on 5 August 2025.**

December 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 West Lothian Council to close Linlythgow Bridge Nursery Class. 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 of the setting; any other users; children likely to become learners 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 2 October 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of Linlithgow Bridge Nursery, Linlithgow Primary School Nursery, First Adventure Nursery, and The Kidz Stop Nursery, including discussions 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 public consultation ran from 9 September to 1 November 2024. The proposal was available on the council website. Paper copies and accessible formats were available on request.

This proposal is one of nine closure proposals for early years and childcare settings on which the council are consulting. The council held a public meeting at Linlithgow Bridge Primary School on 2 October, the council recorded that 73 members of the public attended this meeting. Almost all attendees were opposed to the proposals. Their main points for concern related to the selection criteria, the impact on children attending the nursery and subsequent transitions, the safety of travel, and impact on the primary school roll. They sought clarity on areas including alternative arrangements to deliver 1140 hours, staffing ratios and overall capacity of ELC settings. Almost all of the 140 representations sent to the council as part of the consultation process opposed the proposal. The reasons for opposition were similar to the concerns raised at the public meeting.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In its educational benefits statement, the council have outlined the efficiencies that arise from this proposal. They state how their council's proposal takes forward national policy for curriculum, play and providing children with free 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. HM Inspectors agree that some rationalisation of nursery provision may be reasonable as it is important that the council ensure best use of their resources. It is also important to make sure that stakeholders can understand positive changes, where they exist, for children in the settings affected. In preparing its report the council should more clearly outline the educational benefits from this proposal. HM Inspectors agree that should this proposal be agreed, it will be important that the closure is managed well and transition arrangements are developed with stakeholders.

3.2 HM Inspectors met with a range of stakeholders as part of the statutory consultation. Stakeholders that spoke to HM Inspectors said that they understood the need for the rationalisation of services given the financial context. However, they feel strongly that the proposal to close Linlithgow Bridge nursery class in August 2025 would adversely impact children, families and staff already attending and working in the setting. Parents feel that the decision will result in them having no choice for their children's nursery and primary education to be in the same school. This will reduce further their choice between a smaller and larger local authority settings, which could be particularly important for children requiring additional support. Parents and staff feel that in its proposal to close one setting in the community, Linlithgow Bridge is disadvantaged due to its size compared to the other ELC setting. They are concerned that, in the long term, this may impact the role at Linlithgow Bridge Primary School. Stakeholders believe closing the nursery class at Linlithgow Bridge Primary School would adversely affect children's educational journey.

3.3 Parents who spoke to HM Inspectors shared differing experiences in relation to securing their entitled 1140 hours of high-quality education and childcare. They spoke of the challenges they experience in securing preferred patterns of attendance. It is important the council supports parents to better understand the availability and capacity of all settings in the Linlithgow area. Stakeholders further raised concerns that the prior rezoning of the Linlithgow Bridge school catchment in 2022 has the potential to further restrict their ability to secure entitled 1140 hours of early learning and childcare should Linlithgow Bridge nursery close.

3.4 Children at Linlithgow Bridge nursery are settled and enjoy learning and playing in this small, well-resourced environment with free flow play indoors and outdoors. Regular interactions with older children, siblings, and participation in school events foster a sense of belonging and ease their transition to Linlithgow Bridge Primary School should this be parents' choices for schooling.

3.5 Many parents who spoke to HM Inspectors are concerned that relocating the nursery could disrupt routines, reduce safe travel opportunities, and create unnecessary transitions, particularly affecting children who need additional support or plan to attend Linlithgow Bridge primary school. They said that families use safe paths to walk, cycle, or scooter to nursery, promoting well-being and developing their children's life skills. They stated that the busy road outside Linlithgow Primary School has no safe crossing. Parking space is very limited and stakeholders are concerned that the proposal will increase traffic around the school. If the proposal proceeds, the council should engage with stakeholders to consider how these concerns can be addressed.

3.6 The council's proposal paper refers to an integrated impact assessment commenced in 2023 on nursery services. The council should carry out a current impact assessment articulated to their proposal to shape their final decision. They should take account of children's rights and protected characteristics of religion and belief. The council has a statutory commitment to consult parents/carers on their needs for early learning and childcare. They should continue to monitor that the arrangements for delivering the free 1140 hours of play and learning suits parents and carers.

3.7 During the consultation period the council was notified of alleged inaccuracies in the proposal. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors acknowledge that some streamlining of nursery provision across the authority is reasonable. However, the proposal to close Linlithgow Bridge Nursery Class could adversely affect the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare currently provided to children and families. Closing the nursery will result in no option for parents to combine nursery and primary education at the same school. Children are settled at Linlithgow Bridge Nursery and relocating has the potential impact negatively on the educational benefits outlined in the council's proposal. In its consultation report, the council should expand on its educational benefits statement detailing how they can address any potential negative impacts of closing Linlithgow Bridge Nursery Class. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

**HM Inspectors  
December 2024**