

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Ayrshire Council to close Kilwinning Early Years Centre and establish the provision as Pennyburn Primary School Early Years' Class.

January 2023

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 North Ayrshire Council's proposal to close Kilwinning Early Years Centre and establish the provision as Pennyburn Primary School Early Years' 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' 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, 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 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;
- 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:

- 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 Kilwinning Early Years Centre and Pennyburn Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation period ran from 25 October to 16 December 2022. A public meeting was held on 8 November 2022 at Cranberry Moss Community Centre, Kilwinning. There were four attendees at the meeting, although none of these were parents of children at the nursery or school. A question was asked with regards to future staffing of the centre and the council agreed to address this if the proposal was approved. North Ayrshire Council provided an online form which received two submissions. Both were in favour of the proposal. Consultation was carried out with children at the primary school and almost all of those asked were in favour of the nursery becoming part of the primary school.

2.3 Respondents to the survey and children at the primary school agree that incorporating the nursery into the primary school will improve the transition process. Children also commented that it would be helpful for them to have contact with younger siblings and to be able to work more closely together.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Kilwinning Early Years Centre is incorporated within the main building of Pennyburn Primary School. As a result, staff from the nursery and the primary already have good working relationships. Cross sectoral and inclusive working will allow the staff to continue to make the best use of the space available.

3.2 The proposal brings additional opportunities to support transition from nursery to school and to build on positive relationships with parents.

3.3 The creation of a joint staff team, under the leadership of the headteacher, will allow closer collaboration between nursery staff and early years staff in the primary. The school has embedded a play pedagogy approach and this proposal will create further opportunities for staff to learn from each other.

3.4 Almost all stakeholders agree that this proposal is beneficial to children and their families. Primary school pupils recognise the extended support they can give through buddying and supporting transition from nursery to school. They think that they could give more time to buddying if the nursery school became part of the school. Primary school children would like reassurance that no one would lose their job as a result of implementing the proposal.

3.5 The leadership team of the school and the nursery are supportive of the proposal and agree that this is an opportunity to build on established, good working relationships. Improved communication and joint working across the school and nursery has the potential to lead to better support for children and families.

3.6 All parents that HM Inspectors engaged with agree with the proposal. They understand the benefit of one staff team under the leadership of the headteacher. Parents spoke very positively about the trusted relationships they have with nursery and school staff and want to see this continue. Continuity for themselves and their children is important. The Parent Council would like to include parents from the nursery and see this as a way to strengthen the group. Parents do not wish to see any reduction in staffing or resources as a result of the proposal being implemented and would like reassurance that nursery hours and staffing levels will not change.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree with the potential educational benefits of this proposal. There are clear opportunities to enhance the provision through improved transitions and joint working. The physical layout of the building lends itself to this approach and good staff relationships are already in place. Implementation of the proposal will provide an opportunity to increase the relationships with parents and improve communication across all stages to better support children and families. The council should ensure that stakeholders are kept informed as decisions are made.

**HM Inspectors
January 2023**