

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to close Mayfield Nursery School and re-designate it to Mayfield Early Learning Centre.

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 close Mayfield Nursery School and re-designate it to Mayfield Early Learning Centre (ELC). The proposal also consulted on moving the headship of the new ELC to St Luke's Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School and the closure of the speech and language communication provision (SLCP) at Mayfield Nursery School. It is proposed that this now becomes an outreach service. 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 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 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 Nursery School, Mayfield Primary School and St Luke's RC 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, including an online survey, which received 90 responses. A public meeting was held on 17 April 2024, attended by two members of

the public. Pupil voice sessions were held at Mayfield Primary School and St Luke's RC Primary School. In addition, the consultation document was available online and distributed to relevant stakeholders. The majority of survey respondents agree with the proposal to establish the new Mayfield ELC. There was a mixed response to moving the new ELC to the headship of St Luke's RC Primary School. Less than half of the survey respondents agreed, a significant minority disagreed and a minority expressed no view. A few respondents think that the new ELC should have its own head of establishment and a few others think it should be aligned to Mayfield Primary School. This is because survey respondents think that the majority of children will attend Mayfield Primary School. All of the children participating in a pupil voice session agreed that a new nursery, next to their primary schools, is a good idea.

2.3 Most survey respondents do not agree with the proposed closure of the SLCP provision at Mayfield and the move to an outreach service. They are concerned that less children will have access to SLCP support.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits outlined by the council in this proposal. Currently the nursery provision is delivered across two buildings. The original building, built in 1963, has limited indoor and outdoor space and the council has identified that both buildings lack sufficient storage. A new, modern facility with indoor and outdoor facilities has the potential to support further the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence. The staff team will have greater opportunities for collaboration and professional development. The location of the new ELC within the Mayfield campus allows for well-supported transitions to primary schools. Aligning the headship of the ELC with St Luke's RC Primary School allows for shared management responsibilities and promotes further collaborative working with Mayfield Primary School. Parents will have the opportunity to build and maintain relationships with staff as their children progress. Shared spaces in the new campus could support social interactions and help children to build friendships. The interim arrangements to move the whole ELC team to Easthouses nursery has the potential to keep the staff team together and maintain relationships with children. Parents will then have the choice of whether to move their children to the newly opened Mayfield Nursery or to remain at Easthouses.

3.2 The council states that moving the SLCP to an outreach service will bring a more flexible and integrated range of supports, enabling learners to remain in mainstream classes and within their community. HM Inspectors agree that an outreach model has the potential to effectively support children and young people within their local community and ensure that their needs are met. However, a significant number of stakeholders are concerned that this change will mean a reduction in service to children.

3.3 Parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors do not agree with the proposal to move the SLCP to an outreach service. They value the current SLCP and worry that an outreach service would dilute the support currently offered to children and young people. There is concern that the model may be a barrier to children and families. Parents and staff do not fully understand what the model will look like and would like further clarity on the process for referrals. HM Inspectors recommend that further communication from the local authority is prioritised to ensure clarity of expectations amongst all stakeholders.

3.4 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree that a new building is needed. They are enthusiastic about the potential of the proposed ELC and the shared campus with Mayfield Primary School and St Luke's RC Primary School. All stakeholders agree that the shared campus approach has benefits for children, making transitions easier, supporting friendships and improving the learning experience for all children.

3.5 Staff at Mayfield Nursery are excited about the new building. They think it will help them work together better, coordinating support to families and sharing expertise. They are keen to contribute to discussions about the indoor and outdoor spaces for the new ELC. Mayfield Nursery staff recognise that they will be able to learn from the experience of setting up the interim nursery at Easthouses. However, they are concerned that interim move may be difficult for families to manage. Whilst staff are keen to build stronger relationships with the headteacher at St Luke's RC Primary School, they are concerned that transitioning through three changes of leadership during the build phase will impact on continuity for children and families. Should the proposal go ahead, nursery staff would welcome further training in speech and language communication to ensure that their skills are fully developed. In taking this proposal forward, the council should consider professional learning opportunities for staff. This will help to ensure that nursery staff are knowledgeable and confident in supporting children with speech, language and communication needs.

3.6 Parents welcome the proposed new ELC. They can see the benefit of a new centre with much needed up to date facilities. Parents who met with HM Inspectors have no concerns about the transition of the leadership to the headteacher at St Luke's RC Primary School. They would like to see all the staff on the new campus work together, supporting transitions. Parents value highly the strong relationships with current staff at Mayfield. They are keen to ensure consistency of staff during the construction period and the move to the new building. Parents are concerned about travelling to Easthouses nursery and the impact of the disruption to their children's learning. As planned, the council should continue to engage with parents to address these concerns.

3.7 Children at Mayfield Nursery School enjoy the opportunity to learn and play indoors and outdoors, supported well by staff. Older children agree with the proposal for a shared campus with a nursery attached. They think that this will help the transition to primary school. It will also be beneficial for families and siblings to have children in one place.

3.8 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the diocese for Midlothian. Although the nursery is non-denominational, the diocese welcomes the inclusion of a new nursery within the new Mayfield campus. They believe that this will be an important resource for the whole community.

3.9 During the consultation period the council identified an omission with its original proposal. The council rectified these 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 with the overall educational benefits of this proposal. The proposed new facility has the potential to deliver a modern, well-equipped space that supports well the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence. The shared campus could support further the transition from nursery to primary school. Leaders' collaborative approach has the potential to promote professional learning and to make best use of available resources. Parents, staff and children are keen to continue to be involved in shaping the development of the campus. The council should continue to engage with them to ensure that the final outcome best meets the needs of children. Parents and staff raised concerns regarding the interim nursery arrangements while construction takes place. If the proposal is approved, the council should continue to engage with all stakeholders regarding interim arrangements for nursery provision. 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. Stakeholders require further clarity on the model for SLCP to be assured that all children will be able to access support if needed.

HM Inspectors
May 2024