

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION SERVICE

**CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH ENHANCED
SUPPORT BASES AT CASTLEHILL AND WESTER CLEDDENS
PRIMARY SCHOOLS, AND TO RELOCATE LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION RESOURCE SERVICES PROVIDED AT
TWECHAR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Consultation Report

23 February 2018

SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

- 1.1** As part of the Council’s strategy for the provision for children with additional support needs (ASN). East Dunbartonshire Council is considering proposals to develop enhanced support bases in primary schools. These will support primary and early years age children.
- 1.2** To more effectively meet the needs of a wider range of learners, it is proposed that:
- An Enhanced Support base should be established at Wester Cleddens Primary School, providing support to children with a range of additional support needs. The provision would be for children in the early years and primary stages.
 - Castlehill Language and Communication Resource (LCR) should be renamed as an Enhanced Support Base in recognition of the wide range of needs already met by this resource at the primary level. The provision should be further extended to assess and support children’s needs in the early years.
 - Language and Communication Resource services provided at Twechar Language and Communication Resource should be relocated to the enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens.
 - Children currently attending Castlehill and Twechar LCRs, as well as other children who meet the criteria for enhanced support, should access the base that most suits their needs and geographical location.
- 1.3** These proposals will take effect from school session 2018/19.

SECTION 2 - CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1** This proposal considers changes to the current provision in place to support primary and early years’ children. As such, a consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is required. A process for consultation was established as below:
- 2.2** A proposal document was developed that included information on:
- The proposal;
 - The consultation process;
 - The public meeting;
 - Educational benefits; and
 - Issues anticipated in the proposal.

The document also information on how to respond to the consultation. The consultation document is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- 2.3 The proposal document was sent to all consultees identified (see section 2.11). The pack included a consultation document, a letter from the Chief Education Officer explaining the process and how to respond.
- 2.4 In addition to the paperwork being distributed, a press release was issued publicising the launch of the consultation. (See **Appendix 2**).
- 2.5 The proposal documentation was also issued to the Head Teachers and the Parent Councils of Castlehill Primary School, Wester Cleddens Primary School and Twechar Primary School.
- 2.6 The proposal information was also circulated to Elected Members, the Chief Executive and the Directors of East Dunbartonshire Council.
- 2.7 The consultation period commenced on Monday 13th November 2017 and concluded on Friday 22nd December 2017. This provided 30 school days for consultation. The proposal information was distributed by email on the 14th November 2017 and information was available on the website for that date. See **Appendix 3** for a consultation timeline.
- 2.8 Details of the proposal were made available on a dedicated section of the Council's website (www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/consultations).
- 2.9 A public meeting was held in Wester Cleddens Primary School on Wednesday 6th December 2017. (See section 3.4).
- 2.10 Pupils who attend Wester Cleddens Primary School and Castlehill Primary School were consulted and their views were gathered and recorded. (See section 3.5).

2.11 **Consultees**

Consultees were identified according to Schedule 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, under the schedule for 'Establishment', the consultees contacted included:

2.12 **Parent Council**

Parent Councils of Wester Cleddens Primary School, Twechar Primary School and Castlehill Primary School were contacted.

2.13 **Parents of pupils at affected schools**

Main contact details for pupils within Wester Cleddens Primary School, Twechar Primary School and Castlehill Primary School were collated using information provided by the relevant school office.

2.14 **Staff at affected schools**

All staff within Wester Cleddens Primary School, Twechar Primary School and Castlehill Primary School were notified of the proposal.

2.15 **Any body which has been established by a local authority, whether formally or informally, for the purpose of assisting it in carrying out its functions under Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003**

Members of the Community Planning Partnership Board.

2.16 **Trade Unions**

All relevant Trade Union Convenors were consulted.

2.17 **Pupils**

A consultation with pupils was held within Wester Cleddens Primary School and Castlehill Primary School, see section 3.5 for details.

SECTION 3 – RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

3.1 Consultation information was sent all the above consultees and 24 representations received.

3.2 Of the 24 representations received, officers carried out an analysis of representations to identify:

- Numbers of consultees who agree/disagree with each proposal; and
- The issues raised by each consultee

3.2.1 This analysis shows that of 24 respondents, 17 agree with the proposal, 4 disagree and 3 provided only representation.

3.3 **Public meetings**

A public meeting was held on Wednesday 6th December 2017 in Wester Cleddens Primary School. A presentation was given introducing the proposal, and a question and answer session was held.

The presentation and a note of the issues discussed at the meeting are attached as **Appendix 4**.

3.5 **Pupil consultation**

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, East Dunbartonshire Council planned and engaged in a consultation with the pupils affected by this proposal within Wester Cleddens Primary School and Castlehill Primary School.

The consultation process for pupils involved the completion of a response form offering all pupils the chance to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal and with a comment box for use as appropriate.

SECTION 4 – EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Dunbartonshire Council to establish enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens Primary Schools and to relocate Language and Communication Resource Services provided at Twechar Primary School.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to establish enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens Primary Schools and to relocate Language and Communication Resource Services provided at Twechar 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 a copy of 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 legislative 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 of Castlehill, Wester Cleddens and Twechar Primary Schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people 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:

- 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Castlehill, Wester Cleddens and Twechar Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East Dunbartonshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 13 November 2017 to 22 December 2017. A public meeting was held in Wester Cleddens Primary School on 6 December 2017. The proposal document was sent to all consultees according to the Schedule 1 of the relevant act. A press release was also issued publicising the launch of the consultation. Copies of the proposal were issued to headteachers and the Parent Councils of the establishments affected and also circulated to Elected Members and senior officers in the council. Details of the proposal were also made available on the council's website. Pupils who attend Wester Cleddens and Castlehill Primary Schools were also consulted and their views gathered and recorded as part of the process. There was a total of 22 formal written responses to the proposal, with 14 being in favour, four being against and four undecided. Of the 230, P3 to P7 school pupils who responded to the survey about the proposal, 208 were in favour, 21 against and one was undecided.

2.3 Stakeholders who provided a written response to the proposal were mostly in favour recognising the benefits of greater integration for the children with additional support needs. They wanted to see a commitment to increased management time and corresponding resourcing in the receiving schools given the increased pupil roll and expanded responsibilities for staff. Those against the proposal were concerned about the continuing access to appropriately trained staff with the relevant expertise in the new bases and a possible dilution in the high quality of provision currently experienced in the existing establishments. They were keen to express the need for formal ongoing monitoring and evaluation should the proposal go ahead. Stakeholders who were undecided about the proposal wanted more information about: the anticipated impact on children currently attending the Language and Communication Resource bases; the possible implications of staff having to meet a wider range of children's needs; the anticipated numbers of pupils to be accommodated within the new bases; the support and training available for mainstream staff and the plans for continuity in current staff children relationships within the new bases.

2.4 Children who responded to the survey about the consultation were almost all in favour of the proposal. They recognised the benefits for both children and parents of a shorter daily commute and of children being educated in their own local area. They had a few concerns over existing friendships being broken and staffing changes.

2.5 Stakeholders who attended the public meeting wanted further clarification about staffing ratios, access to after school clubs and secondary schools and whether there was a sound research base to support such a change.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to establish enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens Primary Schools and to relocate Language and Communication Resource Services provided at Twechar Primary School is of educational benefit. The proposal aligns well with the new additional support needs strategy for the council. It will help to ensure that children requiring additional support will be able to access support in a new base closer to their home. It will reduce daily travel time for children and the associated costs. It will increase time available for their involvement in planned learning. It will enable more efficient use of the available space at Wester Cleddens Primary School. It will provide bases which enhance the range of support across a wider range of needs. Children in mainstream classes will benefit from socialising and learning alongside children with additional barriers to learning. The proposal has the potential to build staff capacity, knowledge and skills through professional learning and ready access to other professional support from staff with a greater range of expertise.

3.2 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors varied in their support for the proposal. Almost all children were in favour of the proposal, recognising the benefits of having an increased number of pupils in school. They appreciated the need to provide education locally and reduce travel time for the pupils affected. Staff were more mixed in their view about the changes proposed. Most staff looked forward to the wider remit of the enhanced bases and the benefits for both staff and children of having a larger staff network of support. A minority of staff were concerned about the future level of resourcing and staffing in the new bases. They were also apprehensive about the breaking up of existing well performing staff teams. Almost all staff were concerned about the tight timescale and whether this would allow for appropriate transitions for the children who would need it and for receiving staff to build their capacity sufficiently to enable the successful integration of children with a wider range of additional support needs. Most parents who met with HM Inspectors were against the change as they considered that they had not been provided with sufficient information as reassurance that the council had fully considered all of the implications of the proposed change. Parents of children currently attending a Language and Communication Resource base were concerned that the quality of experience for their child would be diluted by the changes proposed. A few parents were wholly supportive and recognised the benefits to both mainstream and enhanced support base pupils of greater integration. Overall, they sought further clarification on the implications of what was being proposed.

4. Summary

4.1 Overall, East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to establish enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens Primary Schools and to relocate Language and Communication Resource Services provided at Twechar Primary School is of educational benefit. While a majority are in favour of the proposal, it is not, however, universally welcomed by all stakeholders in its current form. The proposal, if implemented, will enhance the ability of East Dunbartonshire Council to meet the needs of more children with additional learning needs. This will be achieved through improved facilities, designed to better meet children's needs, located closer to their local school and community. It will reduce travel time for children on a daily basis and consequently increase the time available for planned learning. The reduced associated costs, which can potentially be redirected to support improvements in teaching and learning. The proposal also supports a move towards greater opportunities for children to be more included in events and activities organised within their own local communities.

4.2 With the refurbishment of accommodation still to take place, the council should reconsider the planned timescale to provide a longer, more appropriate time frame for planning and progressing enhanced transitions for the children who will need it. This should allow children to be able to see and tour their new accommodation and meet the new staff who they will be working with before transferring to their new establishment. The additional time period should also allow for more focused professional learning for mainstream staff to ensure they are well placed and confident in their abilities to integrate children with identified additional support needs effectively, into their mainstream classes.

4.3 As it stands, the proposal is light on detail in terms of educational benefits, facilities, staffing ratios and the broad parameters of how the new enhanced support bases will function on a day-to-day basis. The council should provide greater detail including the broader educational benefits of the proposal for mainstream pupils affected by the plans. While most parents can appreciate the benefits of the move, they are particularly keen to know more about the potential challenges that this change will bring and how the council plans to both prepare for and overcome these. In taking the proposal forward, the council needs to engage children, parents and staff further in discussion of the detailed plans for implementation.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
February 2018**

SECTION 5 – SUMMARY OF ISSUES

5.1 While the number of responses received to the consultation was small, a number of issues were raised. These included:

5.2 **Timescale for implementation**

Education Scotland suggested that EDC should reconsider the timescale for implementation. It was suggested this could allow more time to plan and implement enhanced transition for children, and to plan and implement professional learning for staff.

At Castlehill Primary, the provision is already in place, excepting some alterations to the environment to be carried out over the summer. For August 2018, the cohort of children has already been identified and transition planning is well advanced.

At Wester Cleddens, EDC proposes a phased implementation approach. For children already being supported in existing provision, e.g. at Castlehill, other mainstream schools, or at Twechar, it is proposed that transition to the new resource will commence in August 2018, and be completed over the course of several months. This cohort of children has already been identified, and transition planning is well advanced.

However, for children who are due to attend the resource as P1 pupils in August, EDC does not believe it would be appropriate to delay implementation. If these children do not start in August 2018, they will be required to start elsewhere, following a transition and settling in process, and then at a later date make a further transition to the resource at Wester Cleddens. It is not clear that this would be in the best interest of children.

Proposed action – EDC to provide a detailed overview of transition planning process for discussion with staff and parents.

A working group, comprising educational psychologists, head teachers including those who have experience of leading similar resources, has been working for over a year to plan the development including transition arrangements and a professional learning programme. A detailed training and development plan, as well as guidance for staff, has been developed. This professional learning programme builds on the good practice that exists within the authority and will be designed to meet the needs of mainstream staff and specialist staff in the new bases. The professional learning programme has already commenced in some settings and will be on-going in preparation for the new bases as well and beyond.

Transition arrangements have commenced informally to identify children who may transfer to the new provision within Wester Cleddens. Full consultation will take place with parents to agree and plan transition arrangements. More information is

contained in Appendix 5. This will be shared with parents and staff to provide assurance in relation to the transition to the new provision.

Proposed action – EDC to communicate with staff and parents in relation a detailed overview of transition and staff professional learning programme.

5.3 **Impact on existing mainstream provision.**

At both Wester Cleddens and Castlehill Primary Schools, parents questioned what the impact would be on the existing mainstream provision. These questions tended to cover two areas – the impact on the school roll, and the impact of supporting a wider range of needs on the school community and staff.

Regarding school rolls, at Castlehill Primary, EDC expects that the number of children supported will not exceed the numbers currently supported in the LCR. However, the range of needs will be wider, and there may be a need to access a greater number of learning spaces, particularly for early years' children. To support this, EDC is investing in conversion of unused space within the school to provide additional classroom capacity. Plans are currently in development with the EDC estates service, and will be shared with staff and parents.

At Wester Cleddens Primary School, the resource will occupy existing classrooms. However, due to the very low levels of occupancy in the school, there are a number of unused classrooms. This means that the amount of teaching space available to the school will not be reduced. The proposals will move some P6 and P7 mainstream classes to the first floor of the building, and to support this there will be investment in refurbishment of the first floor classrooms.

Proposed action – Consult Parent Councils on the proposed accommodation changes at the schools, and continue to engage parents and staff to ensure designs meet the needs of the schools.

Regarding the impact on the mainstream provision at both schools, it is important to be clear that the aim of this proposal is not to add children with a range of needs to the mainstream environment. Under the proposals, separate secure areas of the school would be used to accommodate children, who require enhanced support. These areas would be staffed in addition to the mainstream school staffing complement, and these staff would be specialists in ASN education. There would be additional management capacity allocated to the resource also. The staff: child ratio would be dependent on the needs of the individual children. In line with SNCT guidance a ratio of 1:6, teachers to pupil ratio is allocated with additional support staff according to the needs of children

The Enhanced Support Base would be self-contained, including separate outdoor space and social spaces, and some children may spend the overwhelming majority of their school day within the resource. However, where appropriate in terms of

individual children's needs, children from the resource would access mainstream classes or activities. However, when this occurred, children would be supported by specialist staff. These interaction would be carefully considered and risk assessed on a case by case basis to ensure that they were suitable for all children involved. EDC has developed detailed training and guidance for staff on how to manage pupil interactions.

- 5.4 Education Scotland also suggested that educational benefits impact could be articulated more comprehensively, and that this would develop confidence amongst parents in the proposals. These are detailed in Appendix 5.

Proposed action – EDC officers to meet with staff and parents at both schools to discuss:

- procedures for day-to-day planning and management of pupil interactions
- staffing within the bases, including management time
- staff training and guidance

Proposed action – EDC to provide a more detailed description of the educational benefits of proposals

SECTION 6 - ALLEGED OMISSIONS OR INACCURACIES

6.1 No inaccuracies or omissions were identified.

SECTION 7 – FINDINGS AND REVIEW OF PROPOSAL

7.1 The response to the consultation was relatively limited, however a significant majority of responses agreed with the proposal. Overall, as noted by Education Scotland:

“While a majority are in favour of the proposal, it is not, however, universally welcomed by all stakeholders in its current form.”

7.2 EDC believe the proposal to have clear educational benefit, and Education Scotland note that:

“Overall, East Dunbartonshire Council’s proposal to establish enhanced support bases at Castlehill and Wester Cleddens Primary Schools and to relocate Language and Communication Resource Services provided at Twechar Primary School is of educational benefit.”

And that:

“The proposal, if implemented, will enhance the ability of East Dunbartonshire Council to meet the needs of more children with additional learning needs.”

7.3 Further comments by Education Scotland suggest that the Council reconsider the timescale for implementation. As discussed in section 5, above, this will be carefully managed and the needs of individual children will be paramount. There will be a phased implementation in Wester Cleddens and in Castlehill the provision is building on the existing good practice.

7.4 In order to address the issues raised in the consultation, and in particular to support parents’ confidence in the implementation of the proposal, it is proposed that the actions proposed in section 5, and summarised below, are implemented. If these actions were to be implemented, there would be no barrier to the implementation of the proposal.

7.5 In response to actions 1, 2 and 5, a detailed overview of educational benefit, transition planning and professional learning development has been developed, and is attached at **Appendix 5** of this report.

Action 1– EDC to provide a detailed overview of transition planning process for discussion with staff and parents (See **Appendix 5**)

Action 2 – EDC to provide a detailed overview of the professional learning programme. (See **Appendix 5**)

Action 3 – Consult Parent Councils on the proposed accommodation changes at the schools, and continue to engage parents and staff to ensure designs meet the needs of the schools.

Action 4 – EDC officers to meet with staff and parent at both schools to discuss:

- procedures for day-to-day planning and management of pupil interactions
- staffing within the bases, including management time
- staff training and guidance

Action 5 – EDC to provide a more detailed description of the educational impact of proposals (See **Appendix 5**)

SECTION 8 – LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Proposal Document
- Appendix 2 Press Release
- Appendix 3 Consultation Timeline
- Appendix 4 Public Meetings
- Appendix 5 Detailed Overview of Educational Benefit, Transition Planning and Professional Development.