



Midlothian Council
Children, Young People and Partnerships
Directorate

Statutory Consultation Report

**Report on the outcome of the consultation on the
proposed closure of Lasswade High School
Childcare Service.**

01 April 2025.

This Consultation Proposal has been issued by Midlothian Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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Midlothian Council

Children, Young People and Partnerships Directorate

This report has been prepared following a statutory consultation on the following proposal:

Proposed closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation:

- Lasswade High School Childcare Service (HSCS) will close from September 2025.

The following schools are directly affected by this proposal:

- Lasswade High School.

The following schools will be indirectly affected by the proposal:

There are no schools indirectly affected by the proposal.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- a) Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period
- b) Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting which was held on 16 January 2025.
- c) Any representations made to it by Parent Councils
- d) Oral representations made to it at the virtual public drop-in sessions on 10 and 12 December 2024
- e) Oral representations made to it by pupils
- f) Education Scotland's report on the proposal

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At a meeting of Midlothian Council on 25 June 2024, approval was granted for officers to undertake a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service and for a report on the outcome of the consultation exercises to be brought back to council for consideration and a decision..
- 1.2 Lasswade High School Childcare Service is located within the Lasswade High School Centre in Bonnyrigg. The Childcare service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a service to a maximum of 15 children aged 0 to those not yet attending primary school. As of November 2024, there were 10 children attending the setting.
- 1.3 A review of the service was undertaken by setting management in late 2013 and this was then changed to a childcare setting operating full time places as a funded provider. This change did not require a statutory consultation as the legislative duty to consult on establishing new nurseries and nursery classes was suspended at the time to facilitate the move from 475 to 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare.

- 1.4 The childcare service is staffed appropriately as per the Care Inspectorate's regulation for child staff ratios in group based ELC settings. They are supported by the Depute Head Teacher (DHT) of Lasswade High School and in terms of quality an Early Years Principal Teacher (PT).
- 1.5 The childcare setting comprises of a main playroom with small kitchen area, children's nappy changing and toilet. There is also direct access to the outdoor play area from the playroom. Children also use other parts of Lasswade High School such as art rooms and the library for additional activities.
- 1.6 Midlothian Council officers have carried out an exercise inviting external organisations to note interest in the space to deliver an ELC of Childcare. This and any other potential options will continue to be considered.
- 1.7 This is a Consultation Proposal prepared in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the above proposal
- 1.8 The purpose of this report is to:
- Provide a record of the total number of written responses made during the Statutory Consultation period;
 - Provide a summary of the written responses;
 - Provide a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting held on 16 January 2025;
 - Provide a statement of the Council's response to those written and oral representations;
 - Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of the Council's response to this report;
 - State how the Council reviewed the above proposal following the representations received during the Statutory Consultation period and the report from Education Scotland;
 - Provide details of any alleged omission from, or inaccuracy in, the Consultation Proposal Document and state how the Council acted upon it; and
 - State how the Council has complied with Section 12 of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* when reviewing the above proposal.

2 Background

- 2.1 *The Education (Scotland) Act 1980* places a legislative duty on the Council to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across its area. This duty applies in respect of both the current school population and anticipated pattern of demand.
- 2.2 Section 3D of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (as inserted by Section 2 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016)* introduces a requirement on education authorities to carry out their duty to ensure the delivery of improvement in the quality of school education which is provided in the schools they manage, with a view to achieving the strategic priorities of the National Improvement Framework. It is, therefore, the duty of the education authority to ensure that the education it provides

is directed to the development of the personality, talents and the mental and physical abilities of the children to their fullest potential.

2.3 In addition, Councils have a statutory duty to secure best value in terms of the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003* by continuous improvement in performance of the local authority's functions, while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost and having regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities and the achievement of sustainable development.

2.4 The Council has a number of statutory duties relating to the provision of education in its area including the statutory consultation that must be undertaken when proposing a permanent change to any of their schools, including Nursery Schools, such as closure, relocation or change of catchment area. *The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* principal purpose is:

“to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools.”

2.5 This Proposal Document has been prepared in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, having regard to the statutory guidance published by the Scottish Government on 14 May 2015 and the complementary guidance published by Education Scotland (revised July 2023), which are available for reference at the following websites:

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act

2010: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/2/contents>

Statutory Guidance (14 May 2015): <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/05/4615>

Education Consultation Guidance for Local Authorities (revised July 2023):

<https://education.gov.scot/media/rh0jzhvo/external-schools-consultation-education-scotland-guide-for-local-authorities-july-2023.pdf>

The following information has also been used to prepare the report:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period
- Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting held on 16 January 2025
- Any representations made to it by Parent Councils
- Oral representations made to it at the virtual public drop-in sessions on 10 and 12 December 2024
- Oral representations made to it by pupils
- Education Scotland's report on the proposal

Midlothian's Vision for Education

2.6 The Council is ambitious for the future of Midlothian. By working together as a Community Planning Partnership, individuals and communities will be able to lead healthier, safer, greener and successful lives by 2030. No child or household need live

in poverty. Midlothian will be a Great Green Place to Grow by achieving our net zero carbon ambitions

2.7 Our outcomes for the next 5 years are:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- No child or household living in poverty
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

2.8 We continue to aspire to deliver a world-class education system through equity and excellence. Our vision is to provide the highest quality inclusive education, learning and employability service for all individuals and families in Midlothian. To realise this vision we will support the priorities set out in the Single Midlothian Plan, Getting it Right for Every Child and will:

- give all our children the best possible start in life, providing an inclusive learning environment that builds resilience;
- ensure that every young person has the opportunity to be a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and an effective contributor who is healthy and happy, especially those who are care experienced;
- work with our communities to promote high expectations which deliver the best educational outcomes for all learners; and
- Celebrate diversity, reduce inequalities and remove barriers to learning.

2.9 Lasswade High School Childcare Service is located within the Lasswade High School Centre in Bonnyrigg. The Childcare service is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a service to a maximum of 15 children aged 0 to those not yet attending primary school. As of November 2024, there were 10 children attending the setting.

2.10 Lasswade High School has had a childcare setting registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2007. In 2013 this setting transferred to the new high school building with the rest of the school.

2.11 A review of the service was undertaken by setting management in late 2013 and this was then changed to a childcare setting operating full time places as a funded provider. This change did not require a statutory consultation as the legislative duty to consult on establishing new nurseries and nursery classes was suspended at the time to facilitate the move from 475 to 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare.

2.12 The Childcare service is staffed appropriately as per the Care Inspectorate's regulation for child staff ratios in group based ELC settings. They are supported by the Depute Head Teacher (DHT) of Lasswade High School and in terms of quality an Early Years Principal Teacher (PT).

2.13 The childcare setting comprises of a main playroom with small kitchen area, children's nappy changing and toilet. There is also direct access to the outdoor play area from the playroom. Children also use other parts of Lasswade High School such as art rooms and the library for additional activities.

3 Considerations

3.1 The main considerations relating to the closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service. These are fully explained in the Consultation Proposal Document. The main points are highlighted below:

- The responsibilities associated with the National Improvement Framework and the new duties imposed on Education Authorities by the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 as amended by the 2016 Act.
- The agreed principles underpinning the development of an empowered school led system set out in the 'Education Bill Policy Ambition- Joint Agreement', June 2018 <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/06/8745/downloads>
- The duties placed on local authorities in relation to the adequate and efficient provision of school education in their area
- The duties placed on local authorities to secure best value in the delivery of services

4 The Consultation Process

4.1 The Council has met the requirements set out in the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* with regards to ensuring the views of the community were listened to and their views are included in this report. In order to further ensure compliance with the Act, an independent consultant was engaged to chair all meetings to ensure impartiality.

The Council believes that this report accurately reflects the views of the community, which have been gathered through a range of engagement events and response mechanisms.

It is for members of Midlothian Council to decide to adopt the proposal, withdraw it or seek to consult on another proposal.

4.2 Notification of the consultation was given to all statutory consultees prior to the commencement of the consultation.

4.3 The Consultation Proposal Document was published on Midlothian Council's website on 29 November 2024 and paper copies distributed on 28 November 2024 to:

- Lasswade High School, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, EH19 2LA
- Lasswade Library, 19 Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, EH19 2LA
- Midlothian House, 40 – 46 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN

4.4 Copies of an information leaflet on the consultation were emailed to affected consultees (see list below) and schools and others on 27 November 2024.

4.5 Affected consultees:

- The Parent Councils and parents/carers of pupils and children expected to attend Lasswade High School.
- The staff employed by the Council based at Lasswade High School.
- The Trade Union and Professional Associations Representatives of the above staff.
- The Community Council of Bonnyrigg and District.

- The Community Planning Partnership.
- 4.6 The consultation period commenced on Friday 29 November 2025 and lasted until Friday 24 January 2025 being a period of eight weeks, which also included the statutory minimum 30 school days.
- 4.7 The proposal on which the consultation took place was:
- The proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.
- 4.8 The requirements for consulting on a relevant proposal relating to schools are set out in the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.
- 4.9 An information leaflet setting out details about the proposal and consultation meetings was issued to the consultees listed in the Consultation Proposal Document. Advice on where the complete Consultation Proposal Document could be obtained was included and was published on Midlothian Council's Consultation Hub:
- <https://midlothiancouncil.citizenspace.com/education/lasswade-hscs-consultation>
- 4.10 If requested, copies of the proposal would have been made available in alternative formats or translated for readers whose first language is not English.
- 4.11 In addition the consultation was publicised and received engagement in the following ways:
- There were 09 Facebook posts: Best performing Facebook post reached 6,313 news feeds and 78 people engaged with the post.
 - There were 09 Twitter posts: Best performing Twitter post achieved 458 impressions with 19 engagements.
 - Midlothian Council website consultation page had 20 views.
 - The consultation was pushed during Council news slots on a local radio station.
- 4.12 A generic email account was set up by the Council to receive representations and enquiries on the proposal.
- 4.13 The public meeting was held at Lasswade High School on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 18:30.
- 4.14 In addition, virtual drop-in sessions via MS Teams were offered on 10 and 12 December 2024, which members of the public and staff were welcome to attend, and there was one attendee.
- 4.15 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following persons, including those indirectly affected, were consulted:
- The Parent Councils and parents/carers of pupils and children expected to attend Lasswade High School.
 - The staff employed by the Council based at Lasswade High School.
 - The Trade Union and Professional Associations Representatives of the above staff
 - The Community Council of Bonnyrigg and District.

- The Community Planning Partnership.

4.16 The following schools are directly affected by the proposal:

- Lasswade High School.

4.17 Representations were sought from statutory consultees and the wider public in the following ways:

- An online questionnaire on Midlothian Council's Citizen Space Consultation Page. The questionnaire asked specific questions and enabled general comments and views to be entered.
- Digital leaflets, Council web and social media announcements linked to the Consultation Page. These detailed a specific Education Consultations email inbox, to which any queries could be submitted during the consultation period.
- The Head Teacher of Lasswade High School used established methods of communication to engage/remind parents about the consultation.
- Meetings were held with pupils from Lasswade High School.

4.18 The Consultation Proposal is the Council's response to the points raised during the consultation period on the Consultation Proposal Document.

4.19 This Consultation Proposal will be published for a period of three weeks before a final decision is taken by Midlothian Council on 01 April 2025.

5 The Public Meetings

5.1 The public meeting was held on Thursday 16 January 2025 in Lasswade High School at 18:30 to which three members of the public attended.

6 Responses to the Consultation Exercise

6.1 As part of the consultation process, the Council sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders. The Council provided stakeholders with a short online or paper questionnaire and also made arrangements for receiving additional written responses. The Council received 62 responses to its questionnaire during the consultation period. All representations that had been made during the consultation period were submitted to Education Scotland and any issues or concerns raised are also subject to the Council's response in this Consultation Proposal.

The questionnaire responses are summarised by category in the following tables:

Table 1 – Number of respondents by type of respondent

Type of Respondent	No. of Responses	% of Responses
Organisations	2	3.2%
Individuals	60	96.8%
Not Answered	0	0%
Total Responses	62	100%

**Numbers are shown to the single decimal point and therefore may not add exactly to 100 in this form.*

Table 2 – Number of respondents by category

Individual Respondent	No. of Responses	% of Responses
Parents	34	43.0%
Staff	15	19.0%
Member of Local Community	23	29.1%
Other/Unknown	7	8.9%
Total Responses	79	100%

**The total number of respondents differs from the number of respondents by category because some respondents identified with more than one category.*

- 6.2 For the Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service? The responses were as follows:

Table 3 – Number of Responses by Opinion

Response	No. of Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	6	9.7%
Agree	5	8.1%
No Opinion	0	0%
Disagree	4	6.5%
Strongly Disagree	47	75.8%
Not Answered	0	0%
Total Responses	62	100%

**Numbers are shown to the single decimal point and therefore may not add exactly to 100 in this form.*

Table 4 - Number of respondents by category

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	No opinion/Not answered
Respondents			
Parents	4	30	0
Staff	3	12	0
Member of Local Community	7	16	0
Other/Unknown	3	4	0
Total Responses	17	62	0

**The total number of respondents differs from the number of respondents by category because some respondents identified with more than one category.*

- 6.6 The comments made as part of the questionnaire submissions are included in Appendix 1, apart from submissions which consultees did not wish Midlothian Council to share publicly. Even if a submission is not shared publicly, it has still been included in the collation of stakeholder's views and informed the Education Authority's response as detailed in Section 10 of this report.

Response Analysis from Organisations

- 6.7 There were 2 responses from organisations, their responses have been included in tables 1 to 10 above. All groups did not wish their response to be shared publicly. Even if a submission is not shared publicly, it has still been included in the collation of stakeholder's views and informed the Education Authority's response as detailed in Section 10.

Public Meeting

- 6.8 The public meeting was held at Lasswade High School on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 18:30 to which three members of the public attended.
- 6.9 Additionally, virtual drop-in sessions were arranged for 10 and 12 December 2024, enabling any member of the public and staff to ask questions and discuss the proposal, the consultation process and how they could make representations. One member of the public attended these sessions.

Pupils and Staff

- 6.11 During the consultation period, Council officers facilitated a meeting with pupils at Lasswade High School to provide good opportunities for them to discuss and share their views.

- 6.12 A copy of the information leaflet and a link to the consultation page was sent to all staff, inviting them to respond to the consultation via the online survey and highlighting the consultation mailbox for any queries.

7 Support for the Proposal

- 7.1 17.7% of all questionnaire respondents (11 responses) to the consultation were in favour of the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

The full text of all responses received can be read in Appendix 1, apart from submissions which consultees did not wish Midlothian Council to share publicly. Even if a submission is not shared publicly, it has still been included in the collation of stakeholder's views and informed the Education Authority's response as detailed in Section 10 of this report.

- 7.2 A number of common points and questions emerged from the responses as follows:

- Staff absence issues
- More investment in ASN Provision

8 Opposition to the Proposal

- 8.1 82.3% of all questionnaire respondents (51 responses) to the consultation were not in favour of the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

The full text of all responses received can be read in Appendix 1, apart from submissions which consultees did not wish Midlothian Council to share publicly. Even if a submission is not shared publicly, it has still been included in the collation of stakeholder's views and informed the Education Authority's response as detailed in Section 10 of this report.

- 8.2 A number of common points and questions emerged from the responses as follows:

- Current ELC waitlists
- How will Midlothian Council ensure there are available spaces within the local area if the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service is approved?
- Benefits to staff in terms of work life balance
- Loss of an affordable childcare option
- Work experience opportunities for secondary pupils

9 No Opinion on the Proposal

- 9.1 No respondents indicated that they had no opinion on the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

10 Education Authority Response to the Main Issues Raised

- 10.1 **Staff absence issues**

The setting is based within a secondary school and as a result there is less flexibility when staff are absent in the nursery. This has led to disruption for families as the nursery has had to close as a result of this absence.

Other settings with more staff or that are attached to a primary school will mitigate these disruptions and the larger pool of staff, will allow be greater flexibility to cover absences, reducing the impact on families.

10.2 More investment in ASN Provision

Midlothian Council is actively committed to enhancing Additional Support Needs (ASN) provisions across the authority. This is achieved through our comprehensive support structures, which involves multi-agency collaboration, professional learning opportunities for staff, and the inclusion of parents/carers, children and young people in strategic planning. These efforts ensure that all children and young people with ASN receive the necessary support to reach their full potential.

Council officers will continue to explore potential options for the use of the space, to which it may be that the space is leased externally, or it is returned to Lasswade High School as additional space/room for curriculum areas.

10.3 Benefits to staff in terms of work life balance

Lasswade HSCS is the only setting of its kind in Midlothian, where staff from a secondary school can enrol their children on an onsite ELC setting. This is not mirrored across other secondary schools in Midlothian and as a result there is not equity across the authority.

In addition to the educational benefits of closing the setting outlined in the proposal document, this preferred option would provide and equitable opportunity for all staff and families across the Local Authority area.

There are a number of ELC settings in the immediate area, all of which are outlined in Appendix 3 of the proposal document.

10.4 Loss of an affordable childcare option

With the proposed closure of the Lasswade High School childcare service and to address the financial gap ensuring equitability across all childcare settings in Midlothian, there will be an increase in fees starting in April, followed by another adjustment in August. These measures aim to standardise costs and maintain the quality of childcare services throughout Midlothian, and will be implemented regardless of the outcome of the consultation.

10.5 Work experience opportunities for secondary pupils

Pupils at Lasswade High School currently have access to the onsite childcare services for work experience opportunities. This program is not exclusive to the high school and pupils can continue these experiences at other childcare settings in the local area that Lasswade High School has links with.

10.6 How will Midlothian Council ensure there are available spaces within the local area, given current waiting lists, if the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service is approved?

Council Officers within education will continue to track and assess the availability of other childcare settings within the local and wider Midlothian area. There are various types of childcare settings available, such as school nurseries, private nurseries, childminders, and family learning centres.

If the proposal is approved to close the Lasswade High School Childcare service, Midlothian Council will provide an updated list of early learning and childcare providers, including information on available spaces. This will help to ensure that the parents/carers have options to choose from to find a suitable alternative childcare setting.

11 Education Scotland Report

11.1 In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Midlothian Council's proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service. The Education Scotland report can be read in full at Appendix 6.

11.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 16 January 2025 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 Lasswade High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

11.3 The Summary section of the Education Scotland report summarises their findings and conclusions as follows:

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has educational benefits. These could include the potential for better transition arrangements. Staff may benefit from improved access to leadership from ELC professionals, should they move to provision in a nursery or primary school setting. Children should benefit from appropriate spaces that facilitate the delivery of high quality ELC where they will learn and play with other children at early level. However, there may be potential to achieve this through enhancing the current setting. Should the proposal be approved, the council will need to support staff and families to transition to other provision.

Midlothian Council's Response to Education Scotland's Report

11.4 Midlothian Council welcomes the report by Education Scotland which highlights the benefits of the proposal and the Education Authority accepts its findings. Officers from the Education Authority met to consider the content of the report and the action highlighted in the summary.

11.5 In response to the findings contained within the Education Scotland report Midlothian has been asked to address the following points:

Should the proposal be approved, the council should work with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate support and transition arrangements are in place.

11.6 If the proposal is approved, Midlothian Council will provide parents/carers with information on the availability of ELC settings within Midlothian and the local area, ensuring alternative settings meet the needs and requirements of the children.

12 Transition Arrangements

12.1 Subject to the conclusion of the Scottish Ministers eight-week call-in period or the notification of the outcome of a call-in, as appropriate, if approved, the closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service will take effect from September 2025.

12.2 Children currently attending Lasswade High School Childcare Service will be supported by Early Years staff and Council officers effectively to explore opportunities at other settings in the local area to ensure that continuity and progression in their learning is sustained.

12.3 There are no catchment areas for Early Learning and Childcare.

13 Alleged Omissions or Inaccuracies

13.1 *Section (10) (3) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* also places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission within the Consultation Proposal Document which has either been identified by the Council or raised by consultees. This section of the 2010 Act also requires the Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or, if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.

13.2 Two corrections within the Consultation Proposal Document were identified by the Council following the consultation period. These can be found in Appendix 4.

13.3 The correction to Appendix 1 on the Lasswade High School Childcare Service Consultation Timeline, page 17, occurred due to an administrative error and this was the only place this occurred in the documentation.

14 Compliance with Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

14.1 Section 9(1) of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* states that:

After the Education Authority has received Education Scotland's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to:

- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period,
- (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting,
- (iii) Education Scotland's report.

14.2 Following receipt of the Education Scotland report, 62 questionnaire responses received during the consultation period and consideration of oral representations made at a public meeting held during the consultation period, officers reviewed the proposal.

14.3 The feedback from the consultation was considered by relevant officers within the Council's Children, Young People's and Partnership Directorate. Data and factual information was checked where required and advice and input was sought from other Council Services where needed to consider the issues raised. This ensured that the Council met the requirements of sections 9(1), 12 and 13(3) (b) of the 2010 Act.

15 Legal Issues

15.1 The Council has complied in full with the requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* throughout this statutory consultation.

15.2 The Council is mindful of its duties in respect of equality under the *Equality Act 2010*, the *Public Sector Equality Duty 2011*, and the *Fairer Scotland Duty* (Part one of the Equality Act).

15.3 Under the terms of the *Schools (Scotland) (Consultation) Act 2010*, it is a legal requirement that the Council should not reach any formal decision without having reviewed the relevant proposal having regard, in particular, to:

- a) relevant written representations received from any person during the consultation period;
- b) oral representation made to it by any person at the public meetings held on;
- c) the Education Scotland report;
- d) preparing a Consultation Proposal; and
- e) waiting until a period of three weeks starting on the day on which this Consultation Report is published in electronic and printed form has expired.

15.4 As it is the intention that this Consultation Report should be published, both electronically and in paper form, if required, on 10 March 2025, this meets the statutory requirement to publish this report for more than three weeks before consideration of the proposal by Midlothian Council.

16 Scottish Ministers Call-in Closure Procedure

- 16.1 At the end of the consultation process, Section 15 of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* enables Scottish Ministers to call-in a decision to implement the proposed closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service.
- 16.2 If the Council's final decision is to implement the proposal, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision and provide them with a copy of the proposal document and Consultation Proposal. This must be done within six working days of that decision. The Scottish Ministers have an eight week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal.
- 16.3 Within the first three weeks of that eight week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the eight week call-in process is known, the Council cannot proceed to implement the proposal.
- 16.4 If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, they must refer the proposal to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels who may refuse to consent to the proposal or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally.
- 16.5 Recipients of this Consultation Proposal, and other readers, should note that the legislation allows for any person to make representations to Scottish Ministers within three weeks of the Council taking their final decision to implement a closure proposal.
- 16.6 Midlothian Council will take the decision on whether or not to implement the closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service at its meeting on 01 April 2025. If the decision is taken to implement, any representations to Scottish Ministers, therefore, in this context need to be with the Ministers within three weeks of this date. Therefore, any representations must be made to Scottish Ministers by 22 April 2025.
- 16.7 Anyone wishing to make representation to Scottish Ministers during the three week period referred to above should do so by email to schoolclosure@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or in writing to:

School Infrastructure Unit
The Scottish Government
Area 2A (South)
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ

17 Personnel Implications

- 17.1 If this proposal is implemented Lasswade High School Childcare Service (HSCS) will close in September 2025.
- 17.2. Although Midlothian Council is moving for a proposed closure of the setting, Council officers will continue to explore the potential usage options for the space.
- 17.3 If this proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service is implemented this should not affect future eligible children, as there are a number of other Early Learning

and Childcare settings in the Bonnyrigg and Lasswade area. The space currently occupied may also be utilised by an external provider in the future and could provide spaces. A list of alternative options from Council run settings, as well as partner providers will be provided to the parents/carers.

- 17.4 If this proposal is implemented Early Years staff and Council officers will work with affected families to explore opportunities at other settings in the local area. Any parent/carer looking to register a child must contact the setting first to enquire about available spaces and a potential place.
- 17.5 If this proposal is implemented, the redeployment of staff currently in Lasswade High School Childcare Service would be managed in accordance with the Policy for Managing Change (LGWs). A mix of group and individual consultations will be undertaken with recognised Trade Unions and all affected staff in the setting.

18 Environmental Issues

- 18.1 Overall there are no environmental impacts as a result of this proposal.

19 Conclusions

- 19.1 On the basis of the feedback received and taking account of the educational and social benefits of the proposal, it is concluded that:
- a) The Council believes that the measures proposed in this document will enhance and strengthen transition arrangements;
 - b) This proposal will bring improved access to leadership from ELC professionals;
 - c) Overall, there are strong educational arguments in favour of this proposal.

20 Recommendations

- 20.1 It is recommended that the Council approves the following:
- Lasswade High School Childcare Service will close from September 2025.

Appendix 1 - Comments from Questionnaire Responses

Of the 62 questionnaire responses, 38 contained comments of which 30 declined permission to make their comments publicly available. However, their representations have been taken account of and responded to in Section 10 of the Consultation Proposal. The summary of comments below, were made from the remaining 8 responses who did not choose the option to decline permission to make their comments publicly available.

Comments
<p>Having a nursery within the school was a major benefit to being a teacher at the school. This allowed for myself and many members of staff to return to work full time and having the nursery within the school building was great for work balance.</p> <p>The small environment of the nursery meant my child was well looked after and the staff knew him very well. The care was excellent.</p> <p>My son looked forward to going to nursery here every day and was sad to leave when he turned 3.</p>
<p>I believe there is a shortage of places for preschooler and nursery care is so important for child development and allowing parents a chance to work</p>
<p>I feel if the nursery shuts completely it would be a wasted resource. The nursery if closed and no longer a part of the high school I feel it is deeply important for Midlothian council to take over control of the nursery either as a all year round preschool nursery or potentially run for the ages 0-5years like a private nursery but under the council to be a source of income to Midlothian council which would be so valuable in the current financial situation. There is a high demand for the nursery and it had a big waiting list but now due to the consultation the numbers are dropping which isn't fair to families and staff at the nursery.</p>
<p>Lasswade High School Childcare Service is a crucial service for the school staff who require childcare. Parents/carers have told me over the years that it gives them piece of mind that their child/children are in the same building as them while they are working. The high school have probably kept staff for longer because the childcare service is available. Another parent has said to me that if the service closes they will most likely need to find another job closer to home due to drop of times at other nurseries. Not only do school staff use the service, also other Midlothian Council staff who are term time have used the service and we have prospective parents again in this situation. We also take children who qualify for Good Time to be 2. We have provided a wraparound service in the past with Mount Esk Nursery School and are currently offering this again with one child who has additional support needs. The Childcare class within the school use us for the students to get work experience and some students come to us weekly for work experience/volunteering work, The service will be severely missed!</p>
<p>I hope to start a family in the next few years and having my child at Lasswade would me I would take a shorter maternity leave and I trust the nursery down stairs</p>
<p>I'm a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and believe it would be v detrimental to families if this provisions was taken away. I'd also like to highlight the recent report by the Institute for Public Policy Research and Save the Children on the loss of childcare services for people experiencing higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation (albeit it in England), which points out the issue of the lack of places in school-based nurseries.</p>
<p>Settings attached to schools are full and long waiting lists. No places for 3 year olds</p>

I was very disappointed to hear of the plans to close the nursery. The nursery is affordable and in a good location for local parents, near a bus route and has flexible availability in the form of sessions which no other childcare provider in the area provides. This is a strength of the nursery and should be marketed as so which in lopping would improve enrolment and attendance numbers if that is an issue and a reason for the planned closure? Not a lot of people know the nursery is there. There is a bookbug session on next door in the library twice a week with lots of new mums who have to think about where to find affordable childcare at the end of their maternity leave - there is an opportunity for promotion of the nursery here. I also believe for parents to return to work affordable child care has to be an option, closing a facility that offers this when nursery lists at private nurseries in the area are up to a year long seems illogical and irrational.

Appendix 2 - Pupil Questionnaire Responses

Proposed closure of the Lasswade High School Childcare Service. Lasswade High School, Pupil Voice Session.

23 January 2025.

Craig Murrin (CM) met with schoolhouse captains from Lasswade High School to discuss the ongoing consultation and gain their views. CM outlined the proposal and invited feedback and questions from the pupils.

In regards to the proposal to close the Lasswade High School Childcare Service (HSCS):

The majority of the young people agreed this was a good idea.

Good idea – Hardly any kids attend and there are closer nurseries.

Good idea – Our school is full and would be good to have an extra classroom or to help children with additional support needs in our school.

Good idea – There are other nurseries close in the area and one behind our school where the children can go.

Good idea – Beneficial as our school is overcrowded and we can use that space.

Bad idea – Kids having to move nursery.

Other comments/questions from the pupils:

What will happen to the space?

CM advised that once elected members have made a decision, Council officers will explore the potential usage of the space. This could mean that the space is returned back to Lasswade High School or leased externally amongst other options to be considered, however this will be decided after the 01 April 2025.

If the closure date is September and children are due to attend back to the nursery in August, what will happen to them?

CM advised that for children due to attend back to the Childcare service in August, subject to the decision of the elected members on 01 April 2025, we will inform Mr Hornell and Mr Chisholm of the Council decision who can then inform the parents/carers. If the elected members approve the proposal, Council officers within education will work with the effected families to find and advise on alternative childcare settings in the local area.

CM also stated that staff currently working within the setting will also be supported and redeployed if the decision is taken to close the childcare service by elected members.

CM also advised that the September closure takes into consideration the Scottish Ministers Call-in period, however we could have a decision from the Scottish Government before this to advise the closure has not been called in. Once we are aware of the Scottish Governments decision we will inform Mr Hornell.

Appendix 3 – Public Meeting Minutes

Statutory Public Consultation Meeting

Proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

Location: Lasswade High School, Assembly Hall.

Date: Thursday 16 January 2025

Time: 18:30

Attendees:

Alastair Delaney, Independent Chair

Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships

Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer

Julie Fox, Quality Improvement Manager

Magnus Inglis, Principal Officer / Acting Service Manager

Katy Johnstone, Learning Estate Resource Officer

Craig Murrin, Business Support Officer

Campbell Hornell, Head Teacher (Lasswade HS)

Education Scotland Observer

3 members of the public were in attendance

Alastair Delaney (AD) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Council Officers.

Alastair Delaney introduced himself and outlined the purpose of the meeting.

Alastair Delaney explained the statutory consultation process and the work that would need to be undertaken by the Council in order to adhere to the schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Fiona Robertson (FR) welcomed everyone to the meeting and then outlined the proposals and spoke through the presentation slides:

Statutory Consultation Process



- The duties placed on local authorities in relation to the adequate and efficient provision of school education in their area in the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*
- The responsibilities associated with the National Improvement Framework and the new duties imposed on Education Authorities by the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 as amended by the 2016 Act*
- The duties placed on local authorities to secure best value in the delivery of services

Statutory Consultation Process and Timeline



- Proposal Paper including Educational Benefits Statement published 29th November 2024
- Statutory Consultation Period – 29th November 2024 to 24th January 2025
- Representations from interested parties are sought throughout the consultation period
- Involvement of Education Scotland (3 week period) and report sent to the Education Service

Statutory Consultation Process



- Preparation of Consultation Report – after 24th January 2025
- Consultation report published - 03rd March 2025
- Decision by Midlothian Council – 01st April 2025

Proposals



- Lasswade High School Childcare Service (HSCS) will close in September 2025.
- Although Midlothian Council is moving for a proposed closure of the setting, Council officers will continue to explore the potential usage options for the space.
- The proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service should not affect future eligible children, as there are a number of other Early Learning and Childcare settings in the Bonnyrigg and Lasswade area.
- Early Years staff and Council officers will work with affected families to explore opportunities at other settings in the local area.
- If this proposal is approved, the redeployment of staff currently in Lasswade High School Childcare Service would be managed in accordance with the Policy for Managing Change (LGWs).

Context



Midlothian's Learning Estate Strategy 2017 – 2047 (Update):

- The Learning Estate is a significant and valuable resource for the communities of Midlothian.
- Education remains a key priority for the Council and The Learning Estate Strategy plays an integral role in supporting the National Strategy and informs the Council's Strategic Priorities.
- The Strategic Plan commits to increasing skills for learning, life and work as well as enhancing life opportunities, aligning with the national aim to give every child and young person the best possible start in life.
- The Learning Estate Strategy seeks to provide improved, flexible and adaptable learning environments to deliver 21st century education as part of a wider place making agenda. This vision is key to meet the principles of Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy and to address the three key national education and skills priorities:
 - 1. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
 - 2. Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)
 - 3. Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

Context



- Local authority ELC settings are almost all based on a primary school campus which provides a range of outdoor space and curriculum facilities that are appropriate to the age group. The opening of the new Easthouses PS in August 2024 is an example of Midlothian Council's continual improvement and expansion of ELC settings and their outdoor facilities in line with the Learning Estate Strategy.
- Our modern learning environments fully support the guidelines contained within Realising the Ambition: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families, Curriculum for Excellence and Space to Grow.
- Midlothian Council have a wide range of high-quality settings offering early learning and childcare for all funded children. These include five settings within the local Bonnyrigg area; a fully outdoor setting at Vogrie Country Park; and a standalone setting at Scots Corner offering places for eligible two-year-olds.

Context



- Lasswade High School Childcare Service is located within the Lasswade High School Centre in Bonnyrigg. As of November 2024, there were 10 children attending the setting.
- Lasswade High School has had a childcare setting registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2007. In 2013 this setting transferred to the new high school building with the rest of the school.
- The childcare setting comprises of a main playroom with small kitchen area, children's nappy changing and toilet.
- There is also direct access to the outdoor play area from the playroom. Access to the outdoor space is limited and would require further development in line with My World Outdoors.

Educational Benefits: Learning and Teaching



- Collaboration between staff to deliver developmentally appropriate experiences for all children is more challenging due to being based within a secondary school setting.
- The restrictions of the current learning environment restrict the opportunities for children to interact with children within the same curriculum for excellence level.
- Opportunities for staff to develop their skills and knowledge to enable inclusion is limited due to the isolation of an Early Learning and Childcare setting based within a secondary school.

Educational Benefits: Learning and Teaching (2)



- Local authority settings attached to primary schools have the opportunity to participate in the wider school community with peers who can support and mentor both from within early level and the levels immediately above. Lasswade HSCS cannot engage in this due to the restrictions that come with being on a secondary school campus.
- The current learning environment limits the early level curriculum experiences of the children in the childcare setting. As use of the facilities at the secondary school is limited – both through capacity and age appropriateness – children are unable to participate in activities which contribute to meeting their milestones.

Educational Benefits: Meeting Learners Needs



- The noted restrictions of the learning environment and resources can restrict the planning of appropriate learning experiences to strengthen the motivation and engagement of children in their learning.
- Access to digital learning experiences is limited and children do not have the opportunities to develop digital skills of lifelong learning. All local authority settings have a range of digital devices for children with learning and teaching approaches including the use of modern digital technologies to enhance high-quality learning experiences for all children. However, these are restricted by the attachment of this setting to a secondary school rather than a primary school.

Educational Benefits: Meeting Learners Needs (2)



- The flexible and high-quality learning environment and enhanced resources available within other learning environments will further support planning learning experiences that strengthen the motivation and engagement of children in their learning. The significant gap in ages on this Lasswade High School Campus make this harder for those attending the childcare setting.
- Learning and teaching approaches will include the extensive use of modern, digital technologies to enhance high- quality learning experiences for all children. In addition, improved availability and access to extensive up- to- date digital resources by children themselves will promote independence in learning and provide opportunities for them to develop skills for learning, life and work from the earliest stages.

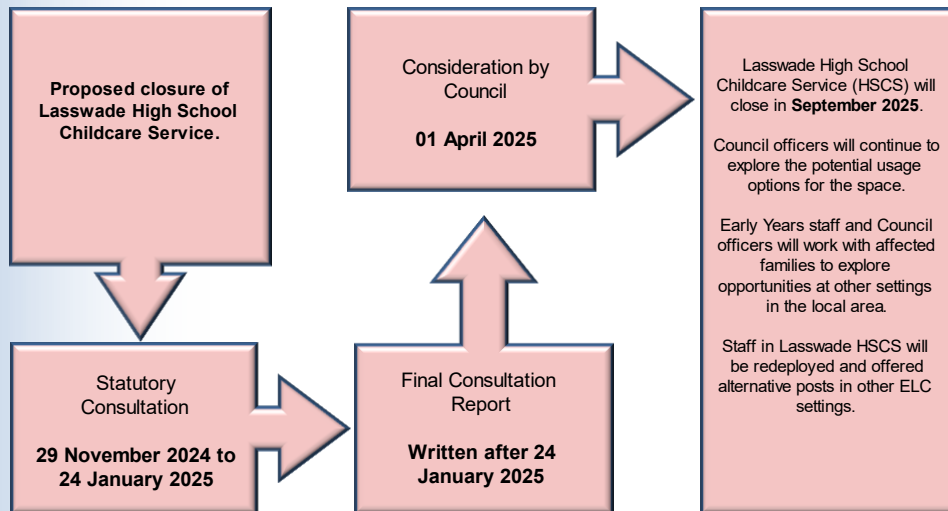
Outcomes



If the decision is taken to close the Lasswade High School Childcare Service:

- Subject to the conclusion of the Scottish Ministers eight-week call-in period or the notification of the outcome of a call-in, as appropriate, if approved, the closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Service will take effect from September 2025.
- Children currently attending Lasswade High School Childcare Service will be supported by Early Years staff and Council officers effectively to explore opportunities at other settings in the local area to ensure that continuity and progression in their learning is sustained.
- Midlothian Council will support current staff to transition to new roles within the local authority. This will enable their skills and experience to be fully utilised in supporting children across the authority.

Project Timeline



Questions?

For any further or more specific questions
please email
educationconsultation@midlothian.gov.uk

Alastair Delaney (AD) then invited questions from the public.

If the nursery closes in September, how quickly will Midlothian Council help families. My child is not funded and there are waiting lists at other places.

FR advised – We would look at availability and tracking of Early Learning and Childcare settings and provide an updated list.

I have had a look at some of the other nurseries in the area and would not send my child to them based on the Care Inspectorate reports and stories from members of staff.

FR advised – Being mindful that we must await the Scottish Ministers decision as a closure can be called in. There is interest in the space and if the decision by Council in April is to close the setting, we could engage with those interested however, we must wait on the Scottish Minister decision. Generally, a decision is made before summer recess.

Katy Johnstone (KJ) – Advised that the first 3 weeks are when representation can be made to the Scottish Ministers. The Council will hear back about the decision any time after those 3 weeks have elapsed.

Julie Fox (JF) stated – Just to pick up on the Care Inspectorate reports, each childcare setting has a duty under National Standards, and we work with the settings to ensure they are meeting the National Standards.

FR advised – There is an improvement period, and all settings must have a rating of good or above to meet those National Standards.

What about affordability, I am a member of staff in the Lasswade HS building.

FR advised – A fee review will be undertaken, and a phased increase will be made as we have a duty to ensure financial viability as we benchmark and check against other settings in the area.

FR also mentioned that a similar review was undertaken by Scots Corner.

Magnus Inglis (MI) stated – We want to ensure that we balance the costs and check against other settings so that settings remain competitive and financially viable.

I do not drive or have flexibility due to work commitments. What would happen and would Midlothian Council help.

FR advised – There would be no assistance regarding travel to other settings.

MI advised – There are settings within the local area as well as Childminders. A full list is available on the Midlothian Council website which is also in the proposal document.

Would Midlothian Council help with discretionary places?

MI advised – We cannot take children under 3, however advised on A Good Time To Be 2 places and space availability.

My child will be 2 years and a few months in September and if the nursery closes what would happen?

MI advised – Sure Start take 2 year olds as well as Pinocchio's, Polton Green, Hopefield Castle and Start Bright. We are not pre-empting the Council decision; you may want to make some enquiries now to check availability.

FR advised – We are continually tracking spaces and availability of Early Learning and Childcare.

Alastair Delaney (AD) advised – Just to go back to the point raised on the Care Inspectorate reports, check the dates the inspection report was completed as there would have been an improvement period given.

I never knew about SureStart until now, was not sure I could enquire to them, but I will look into it.

MI stated – on the Midlothian Council website, there is a section for Early Learning and Childcares and there are sections for 2 year olds and 3-5 year olds.

Michelle Strong (MS) advised – If there are any questions which you think of after the meeting, you can email them to the Education Consultation mailbox, and this is also in the proposal document.

Alastair Delaney closed the public meeting, thanked attendees, and reiterated the email address for any questions to be answered by Council Officers.

Fiona Robertson also thanked the attendees for their time.

Appendix 4 - Omissions, Corrections and Amendments

Consultation on the proposal to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service.

Omissions, Corrections & Amendments - Version 1.0 (Updated 27/02/2025)

This document highlights specific omissions, corrections and amendments regarding the published documentation relating to the above consultation. These have been identified after the documentation has been published so cannot be retrospectively included.

The document version number and date can be found at the top of this document to help establish the most recent omissions, corrections and amendments that have been made.

1) Correction: Appendix 1: Lasswade High School Childcare Service Consultation Timeline, page 17.

	Date Beginning	Date Ending	Duration
Statutory Consultation Period Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings • Drop in sessions • Engagement with staff, pupils and parent councils 	29/11/2024	24/01/2025	8 weeks
Education Scotland Engagement Period	03/02/2025	28/02/2025	3 weeks
Publication of Consultation Report	03/03/2025		
Further Consideration after publication of report	03/03/2025	24/03/2025	3 weeks
Consideration of Consultation Report by Midlothian Council	01/04/2025	01/04/2025	1 day
Scottish Minister's call in	01/04/2025	27/05/2025	8 weeks
School Closure Review Panel	27/05/2025	22/07/2025	8 weeks
School Closure Panel Extended	22/07/2025	16/09/2025	8 weeks

The Publication of Consultation Report should state 10/03/2025.

The Further Consideration after publication of report should state 10/03/2025 – 31/03/2025.

Appendix 5 - Education Scotland Report

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 purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by Midlothian Council to close Lasswade High School Childcare 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 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; 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:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 16 January 2025 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 Lasswade High School Childcare Service, 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 council undertook the consultation from 29 November 2024 to 24 January 2025. The council published the proposal paper on their website and copies of the proposal paper were made available to stakeholders. Midlothian Council held a public meeting at Lasswade High School on 16 January 2025, which three stakeholders attended. The council received 62 responses to their online consultation. Almost all respondents are opposed to the closure of Lasswade High School Childcare Services. A minority of respondents were from parents or carers who had children currently attending the nursery or may have in the future. Other respondents include community members and staff. Almost all parents or carers expressed concerns over the loss of onsite affordable and flexible childcare, and the likelihood of long waiting lists if they needed to find an alternative childcare provision. A few respondents were supportive of the proposal. They noted the financial implications connected to running the childcare provision. They also recognised the ongoing issues with fully staffing the nursery during staff absence.
- 2.3 The council facilitated consultation sessions with a few young people in the senior phase from Lasswade High School to discuss the proposal. The majority of which agreed that the proposal to close the childcare service was a good idea. The young people noted the low numbers attending the provision and that there was alternative provision nearby. They also noted that Lasswade High School has reached its capacity and that should the proposal be approved, the space may be available for use by the high school.

3 Educational aspects of proposal

- 3.1 The council's proposal set out three alternative options and other implications, which were considered for the Lasswade High School Childcare Service prior to consulting on the proposal to close the setting. These are to continue the setting as is, to change it to a standalone setting and to close the setting. Option three to close Lasswade High School Childcare Service and for the children to be offered places at other settings in the local area is the council's preferred option.
- 3.2 The council has set out educational benefits to closing Lasswade High School Childcare Service. These include to provide adequate and efficient provision of early learning and childcare (ELC) in the area and best value in the delivery of services. The council recognises that the current learning environment at Lasswade High School Childcare Service creates barriers to learning. For example, staff access to resources to plan appropriate learning experiences and limited opportunities for children to develop digital skills of lifelong learning. HM Inspectors agree that it is important that spaces used to provide ELC must be suitable for supporting children to learn and progress. If the site is to remain open the council will need to ensure it provides a suitable learning environment. These enhancements would include improvements to the indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure they are appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the children. Should the council decide to consider other options further, then HM Inspectors recommend that the council provide more details on what upgrades would be required and their associated costs.

- 3.3 Almost all staff and most parents that met with HM Inspectors recognise the educational benefits set out in the proposal. All staff acknowledged the challenges to their professional learning and development, due to being based within a secondary school setting. They noted the potential advantages of working within an alternative nursery, which may be attached to a primary school. For example, improved arrangements for transition to primary school and access to an up to date indoor and outdoor learning environment, where children can learn and play with others at early level. Senior leaders in the high school felt that ELC staff would benefit from leadership from qualified ELC professionals. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal provides educational benefits and should ELC staff be deployed to an alternative nursery, there is potentially increased opportunities for their professional learning and leadership.
- 3.4 A few staff and most parents that met with HM Inspectors also noted that these educational benefits could be realised through enhancement to the current setting and an increase in fees. Parents are concerned about the potential negative impact closing the childcare service will have for working parents and their ability to meet current work patterns. For example, those parents who work in the high school commented on the potential negative impact this will have on their capacity to support after school groups. They indicated that they may need to leave earlier to travel to pick up their children from other services. Should the proposal be approved, the council should work with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate support and transition arrangements are in place.

4 Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has educational benefits. These could include the potential for better transition arrangements. Staff may benefit from improved access to leadership from ELC professionals, should they move to provision in a nursery or primary school setting. Children should benefit from appropriate spaces that facilitate the delivery of high quality ELC where they will learn and play with other children at early level. However, there may be potential to achieve this through enhancing the current setting. Should the proposal be approved, the council will need to support staff and families to transition to other provision.

**HM Inspectors
February 2025**