

**HMIE**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdadh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Midlothian Council to close Mount Esk Nursery School and re-designate the early learning and childcare setting to Hawthornden Primary School Nursery Class.

January 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from HMIE has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by Midlothian Council to close Mount Esk Nursery School and re-designate the early learning and childcare (ELC) setting to Hawthornden Primary School Nursery Class. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the nursery and the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 19 November 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 Mount Esk Nursery School and Hawthornden Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 10 November to 21 December 2025. A public meeting took place on 19 November 2025 and was attended by seven stakeholders including parents and representatives from local childcare providers. The council received 29 responses to the public consultation with around half being in favour of the proposal going ahead. A few respondents expressed concern about the removal of the nursery manager post should the provision move to Hawthornden Primary School. A few respondents think that the transition between nursery and primary one will be improved if the proposal goes ahead. However, a minority of staff and parents also felt that this could lead to an unacceptable burden on the existing senior management team at Hawthornden Primary School in the longer term. A few others expressed concerns about increased traffic in the area surrounding Hawthornden Primary School should the proposal be implemented.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council believes that an ELC provision at Hawthornden Primary School will result in a range of educational benefits. They outline benefits in terms of inclusion, learning, teaching, achievement and attainment including transitions. They further believe that there could be improvements to the health and wellbeing of children based on previous experiences of including nursery schools as part of a wider school community in Midlothian. The council also considers that the approach is in line with current national guidance highlighting the importance of creating nurturing environments to inspire and motivate learners in the early years. HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits should the proposal go ahead. That the proposal has the potential to further develop shared approaches to inclusion and learning and teaching.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree with the proposal. Parents, staff and children can see the potential benefits of being located on one site. Almost all stakeholders are positive about the potential educational benefits of a smoother transition from nursery to primary one. Although stakeholders think the current arrangements work well, the joint location should help embed this. Stakeholders also think that collaborative working at early level will further support children's continuity of learning and shared standards. The proposed move should make it easier for parents who already have children in Hawthornden Primary School to manage the drop off and collection of children. HM Inspectors agree that being located in one building has potential benefits, including allowing for children's smoother transition from nursery to primary one.

3.3 A few stakeholders at Hawthornden Primary School expressed some concern about the increased workload on the senior management team at Hawthornden Primary School should the proposal go ahead. They feel that there needs to be a clearer plan provided by the council for how the process of managing the two sites in the short term until the physical move of Mount Esk Nursery School takes place. A few staff at Mount Esk Nursery School, although positive overall, are worried about the loss of outdoor space at the current location. HM Inspectors recognise that there will be an increased workload for senior managers at Hawthornden Primary School and that the council will need to manage this carefully.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits to closing Mount Esk Nursery School and re-designate the ELC setting to Hawthornden Primary School Nursery Class. There is scope to strengthen transition arrangements from nursery to primary one and develop joint approaches to learning and teaching and inclusion. Whilst the proposal is broadly welcomed by most stakeholders, there are concerns amongst a few staff and parents about the additional demands that may be placed on the senior management team at Hawthornden Primary School. Should the proposal be approved, the council needs now to produce a clear plan for implementation, both in the short and longer term. The council should also ensure that progress with the implementation is communicated to all stakeholders.

HM Inspectors
January 2026