

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to establish enhanced provision within Shawhead Primary School.

March 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 North Lanarkshire Council to establish an enhanced provision within Shawhead 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' 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of 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 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 26 January 2026 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
- visit to the site of Shawhead Primary School, a meeting with local authority representatives, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 North Lanarkshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 The public consultation ran from 8 December to 9 February 2026. The council published the consultation paper on its website and provided copies to relevant stakeholders. The proposal to establish an enhanced provision within Shawhead Primary School also proposes to establish similar provision in four other primary schools. The council held a public meeting on 26 January 2026 at

Shawhead Primary School, which was attended by six stakeholders. The council invited interested parties to respond to the statutory consultation, there were no written responses received.

2.3 The council met with staff and parents from Shawhead Primary School to gather their views. Overall, parents and staff were positive about the proposal. A few parents raised queries and concerns including the need for improved communication about their child's learning, lack of space for the provision and uncertainty regarding transitions across stages and onto secondary school. A few staff were concerned about insufficient or inappropriate resources and lack of staffing. The council invited Shawhead Primary School to consult children and young people from mainstream classes and from the pilot enhanced provision class. All children and young people were positive about the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council outlines several educational benefits in the proposal that it expects will be achieved to meet the needs of children with the requirement for intensive support. This includes strengthened leadership, transition, learning and teaching practice and integrated planning with partners. The council also highlights the benefits of appropriately designed spaces for learning, the use of technology and an appropriately personalised curriculum. In its proposal, the council state that the enhanced provision will allow children to remain within their local communities and attend school with their local peers. The council states that the proposal will provide educational benefits in line with the findings of its additional support needs (ASN) Review 2019. HM Inspectors agree that making permanent an enhanced provision within Shawhead Primary School has the potential to support better children with the requirement of intensive services. However, the council has not set out clearly in the proposal for stakeholders what its vision, strategy and operational plan for ASN means for how this enhanced support provision will develop over time. Therefore, it is difficult for stakeholders to understand how the council plans to effectively and efficiently meet the rising demand for places that they have identified. In taking forward this proposal, the council should explain clearly to stakeholders how, when taken together, this and other enhanced support provision will meet the needs of all children who require intensive support.

3.2 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors felt that the proposal to make permanent an enhanced provision within Shawhead Primary School would meet better children's social, emotional and academic needs. They acknowledged that during the pilot phase children settled within the provision quickly as part of a very inclusive and nurturing whole school environment. They felt that there is a strong sense of community where children from the mainstream classes support and care for each other and those from the enhanced provision. Stakeholders were positive about the bespoke, personalised curriculum that children experience and the high level of adult support that children are afforded. A few parents had concerns regarding inconsistencies in the use of assistive technology to enhance children's communication and learning. A few parents were also concerned about the amount of screen time their child experiences daily. HM Inspectors agree that it would be beneficial for parents to understand better how technology supports and enhances children's learning.

3.3 Stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors highlighted that the learning environment within the enhanced provision was working well and allowed staff flexibility in meeting children's needs. They had practical concerns around toilet and changing facilities and paths to school in winter. HM Inspectors recommend the council further consider toilet and changing arrangements to ensure all children's privacy and dignity remains intact. That the council review risk assessments to

ensure any required mitigations are put in place to ensure paths around the school are safe in cold weather.

3.4 At present, all children who attend the enhanced provision are in P1. Staff and parents raised concerns about the suitability of the learning environment as children grow older. HM Inspectors agree that it would be important for the council to review the learning environment regularly. They need to ensure that the size of the room and the learning and sensory development resources and play equipment available continue to be appropriate for the developmental, wellbeing and learning needs of the children. Staff reported that when setting up the pilot enhanced provision classroom, no additional budget was allocated to the school. HM Inspectors agree that if the proposal is agreed, it would be important for the council to ensure that sufficient resource is made available to ensure no inadvertent pressure is placed on school finances which would potentially impact negatively on mainstream children.

3.5 All staff that met with HM Inspectors have engaged in whole school professional learning to enhance their understanding of autism spectrum disorders and develop their skills in providing a communication friendly learning environment. They feel that this supporting them very well in ensuring that they meet the needs of all children across the whole school. It may be appropriate for staff to participate in further professional learning to upskill their knowledge of assistive technologies to support effectively all children's communication skills. Staff had concerns regarding the challenges of ensuring consistent and appropriately qualified staff are employed within the enhanced provision. Since the beginning of the pilot, there have been considerable staff absences. This has resulted in senior leaders and mainstream staff having to be deployed to the enhanced provision. Staff report that this has negatively impacted on the support that mainstream children have received. HM Inspectors agree that it will be important for the council to work closely with senior leaders to ensure appropriate contingency plans are put in place to cover staff vacancies and absence.

3.6 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are unclear about the transition process into secondary school. They have concerns that placing requests may be required and that continued access to enhanced support is not guaranteed. Parents feel this uncertainty could significantly affect their child's learning, development and achievement. They also highlighted confusion about the points system, particularly for children attending mainstream part-time. Staff reported that transition arrangements for secondary school have not yet been agreed. Currently, only one available space in the primary enhanced provision remains and all children attending are in P1. Stakeholders raised questions about the future intake to the school's enhanced provision. They are unsure about whether new children would be admitted every seven years or whether the class would operate as a multi-composite. HM Inspectors view that it will be important for the council to work with all stakeholders to develop a clear, strategic model for specialist enhanced provision across the local authority. In doing so, it should ensure the model clarifies and makes transparent transition policies and procedures into the enhanced provision and when children transition to secondary school.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal to establish an enhanced provision at Shawhead Primary School has the potential to realise the educational benefits stated in the proposal for the children currently placed there. Stakeholders who responded to the consultation and met with HM Inspectors are largely in support of the proposal. However, there remain valid concerns amongst stakeholders that HM Inspectors recommend the council address. These include improving toileting and changing arrangements, reviewing the suitability of the learning space and resources as children grow older, and ensuring appropriate contingency plans are in place to cover staff vacancies and absences. If the proposal is agreed, it will be important for the council to address these concerns with stakeholders to ensure the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of a permanent enhanced provision. The proposal does not provide sufficient clarity for stakeholders on how the increasing demand for enhanced support across early years, primary and secondary will be met in North Lanarkshire over time. The council should explain more clearly to stakeholders how its overarching vision and strategy for ASN will work in practice, and how the educational benefits for other children who require intensive support will be met. The council needs to ensure that if the proposal is agreed, the enhanced support provision in Shawhead Primary School is resourced sufficiently to meet children's needs. The council should also continue to work closely with stakeholders to review regularly children's needs and to plan and adapt the provision appropriately.

HM Inspectors
March 2026

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland