

Education Service

Educational Benefit Statement

Proposal to relocate the primary element of Willowbank School

Proposal:

- (i) The discontinuation of the Willowbank Primary School within the existing Willowbank School and its relocation to the current Onthank campus.
- (ii) The establishment of an additional early years transition facility within the relocated Willowbank Primary School.

The extract below is from section 29 of the full Consultation Paper. Please read the statutory consultation proposal document before you submit your comments.

Educational Benefits

Willowbank School provides excellent resources for children and young people with severe and complex needs, some who may require interventions to support their individual complexities in medical and physical profiles. When the school was first opened it was anticipated that the roll would be capped at 50.

Due to increasing numbers of young people requiring the educational provision at Willowbank the current roll is 96 with 100 anticipated in August 2022. This has resulted in internal modifications to the building to create additional classes which has led to the removal of a number of additional learning spaces such as: music room, drama room, early years room, physiotherapy room, speech and language therapists room, medical room, 2 conservatories, parents' room, meeting room and the partners' room that allowed specialists to become part of the Willowbank team on campus. The personal care and toilet facilities that are essential for life skills and for the enhanced dignity of our young would be greatly improved as there would be less pressure on their use.

The school staff team work hard to ensure that the curriculum remains wide and accessible, however the pressures around space are resulting in children and young people spending most of the day within their core classroom and unable to benefit

from accessing other areas of the school. This leaves them at a disadvantage to their mainstream peers as there is no accessible spaces to experience specialist subjects. As there is limited access and huge demand on the PE hall, this results in a reduction in physical interventions.

A new primary with specific resources for this purpose will allow pupils increased physical activity on both campuses such as PE, Rebound therapy and physiotherapy out with of the classroom spaces.

Many of the pupils experience sensory difficulties and allowing for the additional space would ensure that those young people who are dysregulated are able to access a quieter, less stimulating environment. The opening of a new primary facility would enable such spaces to again be available to pupils in the secondary department which would enhance their learning experiences and better prepare them for life after school. This would allow colleagues from a range of agencies to provide early intervention for transition planning to adult services and would allow enhanced community links.

The new purpose-built primary facility would also be designed to allow more access to additional learning spaces and would also facilitate better links with a mainstream primary school to support any particular pupils who may benefit from some of the facilities there. These strong links with a mainstream primary school would also benefit the other children on the Campus as the leadership teams could work collaboratively to provide some inclusive experiences to develop the understanding and empathy of mainstream pupils and provide rich learning experiences involving all pupils on the Campus.

There is pressure on ASN provision across the authority and the additional capacity created at Willowbank School (both primary and secondary) will also mean that children whose needs are assessed as requiring this specialist level of educational provision may be able to move there from other provisions thus freeing up capacity there, for example for a very small number of children who currently attend Park School.

Willowbank School staff will work with families and the staff team to ensure that the transition of children and staff from the existing building to the new provision is carefully planned and managed. This will involve sharing plans and photos as the development is being built and planned visits as the building becomes accessible. This process was done 10 years ago with the move to the new school and was extremely successful in preparing the young people for transition to a new building. They will also work with our School Transport service to ensure that plans are in place to transport the children to the new location. Almost all children who attend Willowbank School are currently provided with ASN Transport so this will be a straightforward change of destination and collection point still in the Kilmarnock area.

Early Years Transition Base at Willowbank School

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision in East Ayrshire is wholly inclusive and is planned on the basis of a range of types of provision in each geographic area, i.e. full day, part day, full year, school year in Local Authority, independent sector and child-minding provision.

The number of children with additional support needs accessing ELC is growing as is the complexity of needs.

This proposals seeks to reflect the findings of 'Support for Learning: All our Children and All their Potential' which reports a strong view in favour of responsive child centred provision; *'This requires a system that has flexible and permeable edges. It must be rooted in the ethos of inclusion, rather than constraining and defining children and young people by building locations and a hard edge separation between "mainstream" and "specialist".'*

The provision for pre-school children with significant additional support needs in the 'Early Years Transition Base' in the new Willowbank Primary will help create such flexible and permeable edges and will provide the following benefits;

- It will help promote children's health, development and learning by providing a place, resources and specialist staff that can be accessed for specific sessions, such as hydrotherapy or rebound therapy, augmenting the ELC provision accessed in the child's local area. This will benefit children living across the Local Authority, almost all of whom will eventually transition to Willowbank for their Primary Education. It is envisaged that access to these services will be tailored to meet individual needs, so for some children, visits may start in their ante pre-school year.

"Early or timely planning is required to ensure continuity and progression between stages or breaks in education as well as effective collaboration and liaison between schools" (Scottish Government, 2004).

These specialist facilities will provide opportunities for children that are not currently available within our ELC establishments therefore allowing greater opportunities to more effectively meet these children's needs.

- Visits will also form part of an enhanced transition process for children going on to attend Willowbank Primary thus providing opportunities for children and their families to become familiar with the school and staff. We know that parents and carers of children with complex additional support needs can feel isolated and anxious about their child starting school and providing a place and opportunities for support for families is an important element of the Transition Base.

"Parents should be part of the planning process, and their views should be sought, and taken account of, and they should receive support, as required, during the transition process" (Scottish Government, 2004).

Scottish Government (2020) advocates an *‘induction programmes include inputs from relevant health care specialists and others who can provide targeted and universal support for parents of children with additional support needs’*

- The Base will provide an ideal space for multiagency work, as encapsulated in the East Ayrshire Council ‘Helping Everyone at The Right Time’ (HEART) approach, to be effective and benefit children and families.

‘For almost all children and young people, strong collaborative work across stages and schools will support good transition arrangements.’ (Scottish Government, 2004)

The Base will allow greater opportunities for early learning and childcare staff to work more closely with primary and specialist professionals. This will promote the development of their knowledge and skill in meeting the needs of children with complex additional support needs, helping to improve the quality of service and better meet their needs in future.