

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education (Community Services) Sub-Committee	Subject: EARLY YEARS EXPANSION - A PROGRESS REPORT
From: Director of Education	
Date: 14 May 1997	
Ref: JMcG/LL	

Purpose of Report

To provide members with updating information on the progress of the education department's plans for expansion of early years services.

Recommendation

The sub-committee is asked to:

- (i) note the progress made by the education department since March 1997.
- (ii) note and approve the steps being taken to progress the development of the nursery centre at the St. Patrick's High School building.
- (iii) note and approve the revised proposals outlined in section 4 including the relocation of Braidhurst Nursery Centre and the establishment of a satellite provision of Forgewood Nursery Centre within the premises currently occupied by Braidhurst Nursery Centre.
- (iv) note the appointment of temporary nursery staff for one year pending the outcome of the new government's review of the voucher scheme.
- (v) refer the report to the Personnel Services Committee for information
- (vi) otherwise note the contents of the report

Members wishing further information should contact:

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education, on 01236 812307 or
Jim McGuinness, Head of Service, Support for Learning on 01236 812280

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Early Years Expansion - A Progress Report

Report by Director

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 18 March 1997 the education committee considered a report from the director of education outlining the progress being made by officers towards a significant expansion of current early years provision and the development of several new nursery classes. The committee also authorised the director of education to progress the development of 2 new nursery centres.
- 1.2 On 16 May 1997 the Scottish Office confirmed that the pre-5 education initiative, commonly referred to as "the voucher scheme" would operate until the end of session 1997/98.

2. Progress since March 1997

- 2.1 All of the paperwork relating to the voucher scheme, including registration of existing and proposed provision, has been completed and submitted to the Scottish Office.
- 2.2 In line with North Lanarkshire's recently approved early years policy membership of admissions panels has been reviewed to take account of new classes and centres and the admissions timetable has been amended. Meetings of heads of establishment have been held to familiarise them with the revised procedures and the new documentation introduced following council approval of the pre-5 study group's recommendations.
- 2.3 A major publicity campaign has just been completed. This included announcements on local radio, half page advertisements in all of the local newspapers and the dissemination of leaflets outlining the council's expected provision of early years services for session 1997/98. The leaflets explain the admissions policy and inform parents of the locations and contact telephone numbers of nursery classes, schools and centres.
- 2.4 A 3 day inservice course for heads of new early years establishments has been devised and delivered. An induction programme for other staff is also planned. This will be delivered during the first week of the new term. To accommodate these plans children's entry to the new nursery provision will be deferred for 1 week at the beginning of the new session.

- 2.5 A programme of necessary minor adaptations work has been briefed and costed. Full details of all of the necessary works have been passed to the director of planning and development with a request that they be completed as quickly as possible preferably before the start of the new session in August 1997. It is estimated that total expenditure on these adaptations will be of the order of £130,000.
- 2.6 All of the necessary materials and equipment have been ordered. The total expenditure committed to date on these items is £149,145.

3. St. Patrick's Nursery Centre

- 3.1 A substantial element of the adaptations works referred to in paragraph 2.5 relates to the establishment of the new nursery centre within the St. Patrick's High School building in Coatbridge.
- 3.2 Given the cost of £40,000 it will be necessary for tenders to be invited and a building warrant to be obtained. The department has been advised that it is unlikely that the necessary works will be completed before the end of the calendar year. It may however be possible to make temporary arrangements to enable the proposed nursery centre to operate from the start of the session.
- 3.3 A number of hutments, formerly part of the St. Patrick's High School campus, are owned and used by Coatbridge College. Discussions with college personnel suggest that it may be possible to use some of these hutments for a short period until the nursery centre is ready for occupation. Officers from education and planning and development are currently assessing the suitability of these hutments with a view to securing a short term lease to provide the nursery centre with temporary premises.
- 3.4 Further updating reports on this issue will be brought back to committee as appropriate.

4. Clydeview Nursery Centre

- 4.1 Members will recall the proposal to establish a new nursery centre in the building currently occupied by Clydeview School, a special school catering for the needs of children with profound and complex learning difficulties. It is now expected that this building will be vacated in August 1997 and that minimal adaptation work will be required to accommodate early years provision.
- 4.2 Since the department's expansion proposals were approved by the education committee further consideration has been given to the overall provision of early years services in the area covered by Forgewood Nursery Centre, Braidhurst Nursery Centre and the proposed Clydeview Nursery Centre. Initial proposals to adapt the premises at Braidhurst have been costed at £15,000. This would enable an expansion of places but would not include improvements to the current accommodation for younger children. During the visit by the pre-5 study group members expressed concern about this issue.

- 4.3 The accommodation at the Clydeview building is very suitable for a range of needs and is much more appropriate for the younger age range than the current accommodation at Braidhurst. It is therefore now proposed to relocate an expanded Braidhurst Nursery Centre to the Clydeview building. This would not only have the benefit of providing the younger age group of children with much improved facilities but would also enable the new centre to be established with a very experienced and well - established staff grouping.
- 4.4 It is also proposed that the vacated premises at Braidhurst be adapted differently. A larger playroom could be quickly and easily established by the removal of existing stud partitions. This would reduce costs considerably while still allowing an expansion of places for the older age group of children.
- 4.5 This would essentially create a large nursery provision offering more places than the previous nursery centre. It would not require a head of centre and would be managed as a satellite provision of Forgewood Nursery Centre.
- 4.6 The revised proposals outlined above produce the expected aggregate expansion of places available within the 3 buildings, provide improved accommodation for the youngest children and can be achieved at no extra cost.

5. Recruitment

- 5.1 The final element of the planning process will involve the recruitment of staff, including teachers, nursery nurses and clerical grades. For session 1997/98 it is envisaged that all of the necessary posts would be filled on a temporary basis or by temporary secondment. The timescale involved is clearly very tight but would be completed as quickly as possible.
- 5.2 During the course of session 1997/98 officers will monitor the operation of the proposed arrangements so that the appropriate patterns of staff deployment can be placed on a permanent basis in due course.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The sub-committee is asked to:
- (i) note the progress made by the education department since March 1997.
 - (ii) note and approve the steps being taken to progress the development of the nursery centre at the St. Patrick's High School building.
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