

Council agrees to clarify its position on teaching children with additional support needs

The council has agreed to clarify what education will look like for children with additional support needs (ASN) who are moving to secondary schools after the summer.

Parents were invited to apply for Enhanced Support Base (ESB) places, but most if not all applications were refused. In the official letter children were offered a place in mainstream school with “enhanced support provision”. Parents we spoke to said that this term did not mean anything to them and they were left confused.

Councillors from the Liberal Democrat, Green and SNP Groups all demanded on Thursday that the council explains to parents what exactly is happening and what the reply from the council actually means. The council previously denied that ESB provision had either been withdrawn or stopped.

Earlier, Education Convener, Cllr Joan Griffiths said: “We’re fully committed to ensuring that learners have their needs met in the school that provides them with the best possible support. This includes our 10 special schools and the range of Enhanced Support, Wellbeing and Nurture bases across the rest of our schools and early years centres. There is no planned reduction in resource for these services, in fact we’ve actively increased this.

“To be clear, Enhanced Support Base placements have not been suspended and the Education Resources Group continues to meet and assess decisions on the best outcomes for learners. In common with the rest of the country, additional support needs are rising across Edinburgh. We keep these levels of need and models of provision under review, to ensure we can continue to provide quality support for all.

“We will always strive to educate children with additional needs with the resources that are most appropriate, whilst adhering to the national ‘presumption of mainstream’ requirement from The Scottish Government.”

Enhanced Support Bases are not suspended

Historically education has been provided in ESBs which is a way of including children with additional support needs (ASN) in a mainstream school setting. An ESB is a unit or a group of classrooms within a mainstream school and has been introduced over recent years. It allows children to be cared for in the ESB unit but still have access to mainstream school facilities where and when appropriate.

A spokesperson for Edinburgh Greens said: “The reports about young people being refused the support they need are really troubling – the Council should be doing all it can to support young people to thrive in the education setting which is right for them, and we’d like to thank all concerned parents who have raised this issue with us and set out so clearly and passionately what a reduction in support would mean.

“The Green motion at Full Council today called for an urgent explanation of the situation, and we are hopeful that the reassurances we have heard so far from the Council that there are no changes to levels of provision in Enhanced Support Bases will be proven true.

“But this doesn’t take away from the impact that the uncertainty is having on young people and their families – there remain serious questions about the impact of any changes, and how information about supporting young people with additional support needs is being communicated, and we’ll keep pushing for answers to these questions.”

Cllr Euan Davidson of the Liberal Democrat Group told The Edinburgh Reporter: “I’m relieved that the Council has recognised that there is genuine distress amongst many families regarding recent events surrounding enhanced support bases.

“Transition is a challenging process for everyone but that challenge is often magnified for young people with additional support needs.

“The Council now needs to move rapidly to contact those affected to make sure that these children get the transition experience that they are legally entitled to.”

SNP councillor Kate Campbell said: “Lots of parents and carers have been in touch with real concerns about what these changes will mean. It’s important they get answers and so we’ve asked for details about what the difference will look like between the current provision, and what council officers are proposing for next year. We’re glad all parties are working together on this.”

- The SNP addendum which was not available online earlier in the day [when we published the two Emergency Motions](#) included these demands: “Agrees that the update report on the status of the Additional Support Needs Review, should also include a detailed breakdown of the provision and support provided currently at Education Support Bases, and a comparison of what will be provided in the new Education Support Provision (ESP) that will be available in all schools.

- “This should include:
- · The number of hours within the school day that each child currently is/will be able to access support from staff.
- · The number of hours within the school day that each child currently is/will be able to access a safe and supportive space.
- · Details of how additional safe, supported space will be provided within existing school footprints
- · The ratio of staff support to the number of children supported.
- · Whether staff supporting the ESP will be additional, specialist trained staff or contained within existing school staffing levels
- · Details of guarantees for children and young people in ESB that this will continue through their senior phase including entitlement to ESP
- · Whether there will be PSA staff available to support children and young people during lunchtime and break periods.
- · Details of the equalities impact assessment into this change
- · Details of the funding that will be available to support this change including current budget and planned budget for next year
- · Confirmation that there will be no cap on places available
- · Information about availability or any other changes to Secondary Resource Provision”



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