

Aith Junior High School – Enhanced Provision

This document is in response to the many concerns raised in June 2025 regarding the Enhanced Provision proposals at Aith Junior High School. It is important to start with an unreserved apology on behalf of Shetland Islands Council for the distress caused to parents and carers, particularly due to the lack of clear information available. This was not the intention of the Council, and these FAQs will form the start of a process to move things forward. No Enhanced Provision works will be undertaken in Aith Junior High Schools while there remains so many unresolved questions and concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Enhanced Provision?

Enhanced Provision describes a mainstream school where the spaces, facilities, equipment, accessibility meets the standards identified within Shetland Islands Council’s Accessibility Design Brief (described in the next question). Schools with Enhanced Provision will also have enhanced staffing levels, including staff with higher levels of training and expertise in working with pupils who have additional support needs. As stated in the Learning Estate Strategy, and Accessibility Design Brief, the aspiration is for there to be an Enhanced Provision facility within each cluster of schools and larger primary schools. A copy of the Learning Estate Strategy can be found using the following link: [Learning Estate Strategy 2021-31 - Policy and Strategy Register – Shetland Islands Council](#)

What is the Shetland Islands Council Accessibility Design Brief?

The Accessibility Design Brief was developed to establish a minimum specification for Enhanced Provision facilities. Colleagues from different services and directorates from across the Council, including specialist staff working with pupils with additional support needs, were involved in the development of the brief. The Council is hoping to make this available online as soon as possible, but in the meantime, copies can be made available on request.

Is Enhanced Provision the same as a Special Unit?

Enhanced Provision is not the same as a Special Unit. In Shetland, there are two Special Units, one at Bells Brae Primary School and one at the Anderson High School in Lerwick.

Special Units provide separate classes within mainstream schools. They are purpose-built and are staffed to a different set of nationally agreed standards to those of mainstream. Children and young people within these classes can also access mainstream classes throughout the school.

Enhanced Provision provides specialist resources and facilities within a mainstream school rather than providing separate classes within a distinct unit.

A comparison of the facilities, equipment and accessibility delivered through Enhanced Provision demonstrates that this is on a par with those in place in our two Special Units.

Why do we need Enhanced Provision?

Education is inclusive. We want our children and young people to be educated in schools that have the best possible facilities and support, and it is important that we continue to invest in our schools to ensure they can meet the needs of our pupils, now and into the future. Enhanced Provision is a strategic approach to ensuring that within each cluster there is at least one school

that meets the Accessibility Design Brief and has enhanced staffing levels. This will mean that there are schools within every community that are better prepared to meet a broader range of needs. It also reduces the need for ad hoc and reactive works being carried out across the school estate.

Does this mean that all children and young people with Additional Support Needs will attend the Enhanced Provision school?

Where a child's needs can be met within their local primary or secondary/junior high school, and this is the wish of the parents or carers, they will remain in their local catchment school. However, if the needs of the child are unable to be met in their local school, the next option for consideration will be the Enhanced Provision within their local area. This reduces the need for placements in Lerwick, which is out with the local area and often requires long journeys each day. If the Enhanced Provision cannot meet the needs of a child or young person, consideration will be given to a placement within one of the Special Units in Lerwick.

Does that mean that children and young people from the Westside cannot attend any other school setting?

No. Parents and carers can choose which setting they would like their child to attend. If this is not the nominated school by the Council, a Placing Request can be made. Information on Placing Requests can be found using the following link: [School Enrolment – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Further information relating to placing requests for children and young people with additional support needs can be found using the following link: [Additional Support Needs Information – Shetland Islands Council](#)

It would be helpful if anyone is considering making a placing request that they discuss this with Children's Services to make sure they have all the information necessary to make the decisions that are best for their family. If a parent or carer wants to discuss making a placing request, please contact Children's Services using the following e-mail address: requests.placing@shetland.gov.uk.

If the Enhanced Provision school or Special Unit is not my child's catchment primary school, will transport be provided?

Where the Council has nominated attendance at an Enhanced Provision school or Special Unit, transport will be provided. Further information on School Transport can be found using the following link: [school-transport-policy](#)

Why has Aith been chosen as the Enhanced Provision School for the Westside?

Aith Junior High School is the only school in the Westside that provides education for children and young people usually from 3 – 16 years. Across the cluster there is a wide range of needs, and it is recognised that facilities, spaces and equipment could be improved. Enhanced Provision will deliver a significant investment in the school, creating spaces that can be flexibly managed to meet the changing needs of the children and young people who attend today and into the future.

Aith is bursting at the seams. Is there enough space at Aith Junior High School to make it an Enhanced Provision?

The physical capacities of our primary schools are calculated using the Scottish Government publication, [Determining primary school capacity: guidance for local authorities - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/determining-primary-school-capacity-guidance-for-local-authorities/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx), October 2014, which considers several factors including the size and number of classrooms, break-out spaces and toilets. The capacity figures are reviewed by the Council on an annual basis. These figures are then published on the Council's website and reported to the Scottish Government.

The primary capacity of Aith Junior High School has been calculated by, first of all, taking the room sizes, which are detailed in the table below, and dividing them by the recommended 1.7m² per pupil metric. This is the capacity figure based on the rooms currently used as classrooms.

Room Number	Room Area m²	Capacity Calculation	Capacity
Classroom 0/105	52.30	$52.30/1.7 = 30.76$	30
Classroom 0/109	46.50	$46.50/1.7 = 27.35$	27
Classroom 0/112	45.40	$45.40/1.7 = 26.70$	26
Classroom 0/115	45.00	$45.00/1.7 = 26.47$	26
Classroom 0/117	47.50	$47.50/1.7 = 27.94$	27
			136

In determining primary school capacity, and particularly in the more rural areas, due consideration must be given to the class size maxima – it may be that a school may have a capacity figure due to the sizes of the rooms. In Aith Junior High School, for the 2025/26 academic year, the capacity of the primary department will be as follows, given the classrooms which will be used to accommodate the class splits as already shared by the school with parents:

One classroom at 26 pupil capacity (straight P6)
One classroom at 26 pupil capacity (straight P7)
Three classrooms at 25 pupil capacity (composite)
Total Primary Capacity: 127

Should it be the case that there needed to be five composite classes then the working capacity would be reduced to 125 for that year.

Please note that these figures demonstrate the capacity of Aith Junior high School Primary department and are not the actual numbers of pupils in attendance.

Additionally, the toilet provision of any school must be taken into account. The table below details the toilet provision at Aith Junior High School. With a total of 24 toilets, the school capacity could be 300, but Aith is restricted by room and class sizes.

	Toilets	Wash hand basins
Male	14	13
Female	8	11
Accessible	2	2
Totals	24	26

As seen on the Shetland Island Council website, [school-capacities-september-2024](#), Aith primary is sitting at 78% capacity for this year, with projected capacities showing this decreasing over the next few years. How projected capacities are worked out is explained in the next question and answer.

Although there is no nationally recognised calculation for secondary capacity, data of room usage has been analysed, the secondary classrooms are used, on average, 60% of the time at Aith Junior High School for teaching. This does not include additional uses.

Repurposing spaces to ensure that they can be used flexibly for all children and young people who attend Aith Junior High School will provide the management team with a wider range of options as to how spaces might be used. This is a move away from one space, one use. For example, an upgraded classroom space could be used for an individual, small group of individuals or for mainstream teaching. It is appreciated that this will require changes to practice and innovative timetabling.

What figures are used for projecting school rolls? Is there an allowance made for new housing built in the area?

Projected school rolls over a three-year period are submitted to central officers by head teachers in March and September each year. These are produced using Child Health Information data, local intelligence, school enrolment forms and current school roll information. For the purposes of determining the percentage of current capacity, the Council uses the primary school roll as it stands on census day in September.

When considering whether to grant a Placing Request, ‘Reserved Places’ have to be taken into consideration. There should be one ‘Reserved Place’ for each primary class within the school. If a school has five classes, then 5 reserved places would be kept for children who may move into the catchment area.

The school roll information provided in March 2025 shows that the primary roll is decreasing over the next three years. In the secondary department the school roll is projected to decrease from 112 in 2025/26 to 100 in 2027/28. This suggests that the current school roll is at its peak.

However, projected school rolls are constantly being updated, analysed and discussed by staff across Children’s Services. Head Teachers are key to ensuring the most up to date information is taken into account.

Why has an extension not been considered as an option?

Enhanced Provision was never intended to include extensions to schools that would effectively form a Special Unit. It is about making enhancements to the existing provision by improving the current facilities within the existing footprint of the building for all children and young people. This is affordable and deliverable across the ten schools identified for Enhanced Provision across Shetland in the Learning Estate Strategy. [Learning Estate Strategy 2021-31 - Policy and Strategy Register – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Why can the Skeld school not be used as an ASN hub?

Skeld is currently mothballed and in order for it to be used permanently for any other purpose, a decision of the Council would be required to take forward consultation on statutory school closure.

The Learning Estate Strategy does not include any plans for building new Special Units or Special Schools. Officers have no current Council decision to consider these types of works.

What is the timescale for Enhanced Provision works at Aith Junior High School?

Following the approval of the Business Justification Case by Members in December 2024, funding for the Business Justification Case was confirmed in the Council Budget on 20 February 2025. Funding will run over a two-year period.

The scheduled works for the Summer 2025 holidays will comprise of electrical works, fire alarm upgrades and measures to upgrade radon levels in one area of the school, which are not part of the Enhanced Provision.

It was planned that Enhanced Provision works would commence in October 2025.

What discussions have taken place with the school between the start of this project and now?

A visit to the school by Children's Services and the Architectural and Surveying team first took place in September 2023. The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher led a tour of the school to highlight areas they felt needed work/refurbishment. Between then and March 2024, the team looked at various options that would assist the school to comply with the Shetland Islands Council Accessibility Design Brief as an Enhanced Provision school.

Between April and August 2024, regular meetings were held with the school management team to agree a proposed plan to accompany the Business Justification Case. The proposed plan and Business Justification Case and other supporting documents were submitted to the Council's Asset Investment Group for consideration in November 2024. The Business Justification Case was approved by the Shetland Island Council on 11 December 2024.

How has the current plan been developed?

Staff from across the Council have been involved in the development of the proposed plan for Enhanced Provision at Aith Junior High School, including Children's Services, Building Services and Assets, Commissioning and Procurement.

A range of professionals with specific expertise and experience in supporting children and young people with additional support needs have provided specialist advice and guidance in developing both the Accessibility Design Brief and the plan for Aith.

Paying close attention to the Accessibility Design Brief, a number of versions of a proposed plan have been developed between December 2023 and December 2024. Discussions have taken place with the senior management team on the proposed plans, and their feedback has been used to make further changes.

How has the community been consulted on Enhanced Provision plans?

It is recognised that consultation with parents, pupils and wider Aith Junior High School staff on the development of the plan has not yet been undertaken.

The current version of the proposed plan was used to develop estimated costs to enable the project to proceed to this stage.

Consultation with parents, pupils and wider staff groups across the cluster was initially planned for the summer term. However, this has not yet happened. Next steps are described in a separate question below.

Why are cupboards going to be used for pupils with Additional Support Needs?

Children and young people with additional support needs are not going to be educated in cupboards.

The proposed plan shows one current cupboard space that will be repurposed into a sensory room. Sensory rooms benefit from not having a window as this allows for better control of lighting, which is crucial for creating a calming and focused environment. Windows can also be a source of distraction and can interfere with the effectiveness of visual sensory equipment.

It is important that a range of different spaces are developed as part of Enhanced Provision that can be used flexibly depending on what the pupils in the school need. This includes smaller, breakout spaces which can be used by all pupils who would benefit from them. For example, they may be used by a pupil who prefers a quiet space to complete work, or a pupil who needs space to regulate their emotions. These small spaces are not teaching spaces. They are not designed or intended for long periods of use.

The smallest room being proposed to use is 11.5m². This is the Low Sensory stimulation area (currently music tuition). This is much bigger than would normally be classed as a cupboard. Any rooms smaller than that we propose to use are actual stores, not intended for occupation by people.

Why are you proposing to use a room for a sensory space which is currently out of use due to high radon levels?

As part of Shetland Islands Council statutory obligations, all properties in the estate are required to have radon surveys undertaken every 10 years. When a property is due to be surveyed, the Council supplies floor plans to Radon Scotland, who then provide recommendations for areas to be monitored.

High levels of radon were recorded in one room at Aith Junior High School following a recent scheduled survey. The levels remained high following a second test. Therefore, Estate Operations have been working with the school to continue to monitor the levels through use of an app. The school were instructed not to use the room and signage was erected stating this. Estate Operations have been in communication with the school to explain what measures should be in place to help reduce the radon in the room.

Radon Scotland have provided recommendations for engineering works to reduce the radon levels in the room to a safe level and plan to be at the school to undertake works between now and the end of the summer holidays. Following completion of works, the room will undergo

annual retesting to ensure that radon is being kept at a safe level. Aith Junior High School is not the only school awaiting similar works.

What is the recommended operational capacity for a child who is at Stage 3 of the Stages of Intervention?

Every child and young person is an individual and has a different set of needs. Some pupils who are at Stage 3 of the Stages of Intervention manage unsupported in mainstream classes and do not require any additional space or resources. Planning for a child or young person's needs must be done on an individual basis, giving very careful consideration to what they need. Where a child or young person requires specialist equipment, for example, they are likely to require more space and this will be planned for. There is no statutory minimum for pupils with additional support needs.

How many children in stage 2 & 3 are currently allocated to an ASN Teacher in Aith?

Currently, across Shetland, Additional Support Needs Teacher time is allocated on the ratio of 0.1 FTE per 15 pupils, including children in early learning and childcare. Therefore, the current allocation for Aith Junior High School is 1.6 FTE. We have recently recruited to a Principal Teacher for Additional Support Needs at Aith Junior High School, as part of Enhanced Provision. This provides some of the additional capacity for Enhanced Provision schools.

What is meant by the term 'ASN Hub' that has been used?

This term has perhaps not been helpful. It was referred to in the Business Justification Case relating to staffing. Enhanced Provision would provide a base for staff who have specialised skills and expertise who would be co-located and would support children and young people in Aith Junior High School and across the Westside.

Do the plans comply with building regulations in relation to ventilation and lighting?

All works undertaken will be in line with regulations. Building Regulations 3.14.1 states ventilation should be by natural, mechanical or a combination of natural and mechanical means. Only rooms over 4m² are required to be ventilated, however suitable ventilation would be provided to any room requiring it.

Building Regulations 3.14.12 paragraph a. states natural ventilation should be at least 1/30th of floor area. Note – this is ventilator area, not openable window area. There is no requirement for natural lighting other than in a dwelling.

Natural lighting only applies to dwellings in the Building Regulations. Two spaces on the proposed plan would have no windows but it is proposed that these would be used as sensory rooms which would be darkened and only used for short periods of time. The other space that has no natural light is the designated ASN office space which will be used by staff for short periods of time when they are not working with children and young people.

What happens next?

The Council recognises that a clear communication plan with parents is required. An initial meeting with representatives from the Parent Council is planned for week commencing 16 June 2025 and a communication plan will be developed in discussion with the Parent Council.

There will also be a lessons learned investigation carried out which will include conversations with those who have been most affected by the issues raised and lead to recommendations to be

considered by senior managers and elected members to improve on how projects of this nature are taken forward in the future.

How will the Council communicate with parents/carers who have submitted concerns to the Council and/or elected members?

These FAQs, together with a covering letter, will be sent to all parents and carers who have submitted concerns to the Council and/or elected members. The covering letter will set out how parents and carers can take further action and/or be involved in how the Council moves forward with the Aith Junior High School community.

What if parents and carers continue to have concerns?

After reading these FAQs, if any parent or carer continues to have concerns, they can contact the Director of Children's Services using the following e-mail address, Education.SocialServices@shetland.gov.uk

What are the next steps?

Officers have met with representatives from the Parent Council to discuss concerns raised. It has been agreed that a meeting will be held with representatives from the Parent Council, Assets, Commissioning and Procurement and the Learning Estates Team to enable representatives from the Parent Council to input their views on the further development of a proposed plan.

The school's management team will liaise with staff to ensure that they are given the opportunity to input on the further development of a proposed plan.

Officers from the Council, including the school's management team, will meet again with representatives from the Parent Council following the summer holidays. If a proposed plan can be agreed, a wider consultation exercise will be undertaken after the summer holidays. The nature of this consultation will be agreed at the meeting.