

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Glasgow City Council to change the catchment area for Hillhead Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Glasgow City Council's proposal to change the catchment area for Hillhead Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood 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' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposals, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposals for children and young people of the schools; 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 August 2014 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of Hillhead Primary School and Kelvin Park Early Years Centre, Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Hyndland Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Thornwood Primary School, Hillhead High School and Hyndland Secondary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Glasgow City Council undertook the consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 Hillhead Primary School was relocated to its current purpose-built location in 2011 following closures and mergers with Dowanhill Primary School, Kelvinhaugh Primary School and Willowbank Primary School. Its catchment area is the combined previous catchments for these four schools. Glasgow City Council has consulted on a proposal to change the catchment area for Hillhead Primary School by re-zoning areas of the current catchment area to Oakgrove Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School. In addition, the council proposes to close Kelvin Park Early Years Centre and allocate the places at other council early years provision. The proposal states that the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* is not applicable to the proposed closure of Kelvin Park Early Years Centre.

2.3 The initial consultation period began on 11 June 2014. Public meetings were held in Hillhead Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Hyndland Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School and Thornwood Primary School on 26, 27 and 28 August 2014 and 2, 3 and 4 September 2014 respectively. During the consultation period the council issued an alternative option to the closure of Kelvin Park Early Years Centre to be considered in conjunction with the original proposal. The alternative option proposes that Kelvin Park Early Years Centre would not now be closed and that additional teaching spaces would be provided within Hillhead High School in order to provide Hillhead Primary School with flexible space. The alternative option further indicates that P7 pupils would be likely to spend two or three days per week at Hillhead High School with the remainder of their time at Hillhead Primary School. In order to allow consideration of this alternative option, the consultation period was extended for a further six weeks from 29 September until 10 November 2014.

2.4 Over 2,400 responses were submitted in relation to the consultation on the proposal across both options. Three hundred and thirty six supported the proposal and 2,092 were against it. Some stakeholders were critical of the council for not providing the proposal papers or the response forms in languages other than English. Others found the response form confusing to complete.

2.5 In relation to the two options proposed, 18% of responses supported the first option. Twenty nine per cent of those responding on behalf of Hillhead Primary School supported the option. None of those responding on behalf of Kelvin Park Early Years Centre supported the first option.

2.6 Twelve per cent of responses supported the alternative option. Fifteen per cent of those who responded on behalf of Hillhead Primary School and less than 2% of those who responded on behalf of Hillhead High School supported the alternative option. Almost all of those who responded on behalf of Kelvin Park Early Years Centre supported the alternative option.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal to change the catchment area for Hillhead Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School and close Kelvin Park Early Years Centre was designed to alleviate the pressure on the capacity of Hillhead Primary School. As such, the proposal has the potential to address a problem that is widely acknowledged to exist through a managed reduction in the school's roll and the creation of more teaching space within the school.

3.2 Glasgow City Council identifies a number of educational benefits of the proposal. Firstly, Hillhead Primary School would benefit from having its catchment area aligned with the demographic changes which have occurred over the past few years in the area where the school is situated. The council notes that for a variety of reasons the number of families with young children within the catchment area has increased. Many children now enrolling in Hillhead Primary School were not born when construction of the new school commenced. In addition, a significant number of children attend Hillhead Primary School as a result of placing requests granted either prior to, or shortly after, the new school opened in 2011. However, parents and staff from Hillhead Primary School, both in their consultation responses and in meetings with HM Inspectors, expressed reasonable concerns that the proposed changes will break up the community that has developed at Hillhead Primary School over the past three years. They were concerned that the diversity of the pupil population within the school, which they consider to be one of its strengths, will be adversely affected. Hillhead Primary School would also be near one edge of its redrawn catchment area and many of those who live very close to the school would be re-zoned to another primary school. This would have an adverse impact on children's daily journey to school. Whilst the catchment area changes would address the immediate pressure on Hillhead Primary School, parents have concerns that further housing is likely to be built within the new catchment area in the near future, creating further pressure on the school's capacity. Given these concerns, the council needs to set out more clearly in its final consultation report the benefits that this aspect of the proposal would bring.

3.3 The council states that the proposal would reduce the number of areas around Hillhead Primary School with shared catchments. The council believes this would be more straightforward for parents and carers in relation to the schools their children are entitled to attend. However, parents at Hillhead Primary School have stated, both in their consultation responses and in meetings with HM Inspectors, that

this would bring complications for parents who find themselves re-zoned to a different primary school. Staff at other primary schools have expressed concerns, both in their consultation responses and in meetings with HM Inspectors, about the potential pressure being put on their current operating capacities. The council needs to address these concerns in its final consultation report.

3.4 In the proposal, the council indicates that the rolls at Oakgrove Primary School, Anderston Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School resulting from the proposed catchment area changes would increase. This would create larger staff teams within the schools. This has the potential to give the schools more flexibility in the deployment of staff with increased opportunities for the sharing of expertise. In meetings with HM Inspectors, staff, parents and children from the majority of these primary schools would welcome more pupils and consider that they have enough space for them. However, Hyndland Primary School and Garnetbank Primary School already have high occupancy rates. Staff and children at these schools have reasonable concerns about the implications of increasing the roll in schools which are already close to capacity and the projected occupancy rate for Hyndland Primary School printed in the proposal document remains high. However, the occupancy rate for Garnetbank Primary School is projected to fall despite receiving part of Hillhead Primary School's catchment area. No projected occupancy rates are given for Thornwood Primary School. In its final consultation report the council needs to provide more information on the impact on occupancy rates of all schools involved should the proposal go ahead.

3.5 Staff and parents at Kelvin Park Early Years Centre, through their consultation responses or through discussion with HM Inspectors, are keen to keep the provision open at its current location. They welcome the alternative option as an opportunity to remain open in their current location and some have indicated that additional teaching spaces being provided within Hillhead High School for P7 pupils from Hillhead Primary School would be an opportunity to try something different. The proposal does not specify any educational benefits for the children who currently attend Kelvin Park Early Years Centre that would result from the closure of the centre. The council feels that there would be no detriment in the quality of learning and childcare being delivered following its closure as the children will have access to alternative nurseries and early years learning and childcare that provide experiences of at least an equal quality. Parents are aware that alternative provision is available but they believe this is neither as comprehensive nor as flexible to individual needs as the current provision at Kelvin Park Early Years Centre. The council acknowledges that some parents may experience some inconvenience due to the changes to their current childcare arrangements and has committed itself to working with them to minimise any disruption. If the council chooses to pursue the aspect of the proposal that will lead to the closure of Kelvin Park Early Years Centre, it will need to set out clearly in its final consultation report the educational benefits of this for children.

3.6 One hundred and twenty stakeholders who responded to the consultation, and focus groups of staff, parents and pupils from Hillhead Primary School, Hillhead High School, Anderson Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School who met

with HM Inspectors, suggested that Kelvin Park Early Years Centre should be relocated rather than closed. The council should provide stakeholders with more information about why this is not a suitable option.

3.7 In the alternative option, rather than close Kelvin Park Early Years Centre, the council proposes to provide additional teaching spaces for P7 pupils from Hillhead Primary School within Hillhead High School. The council identifies a number of educational benefits of this alternative option. The council believes that implementation of the option would enhance transition planning between P7 and S1 for those who would be moving on to Hillhead High School. However, consultees expressed a range of reasonable concerns about the potential impact of this aspect of the alternative option. Children from Hillhead Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors feel that they would be neither attached to their primary school nor fully part of the secondary school as they would spend around half of their week in each. They and their teachers, also in discussion with HM Inspectors, are concerned that this would compromise the traditional enhanced roles of P7 pupils, including their buddying responsibilities with younger children and being ambassadors for the school. Children from Anderston Primary School, Garnetbank Primary School, Oakgrove Primary School, Hyndland Primary School and Thornwood Primary School, in discussion with HM Inspectors, expressed concerns that this approach could unintentionally result in a twin track transition process, with Hillhead Primary School pupils being treated preferentially to pupils from other associated primary schools. Hillhead Secondary School staff, in discussion with HM Inspectors, were similarly concerned that this option could compromise transition from primary by creating two distinct groups of P7 pupils who would need to be dealt with differently. If the council chooses to take forward the alternative option, it will need to address these concerns in its final consultation report.

3.8 The council believes that the alternative option will provide P7 children from Hillhead Primary School with access to specialist resources in Hillhead High School, such as science laboratories. However, teachers from both Hillhead Primary School and Hillhead High School, in focus group discussions with HM Inspectors, identified a number of potential barriers to this working effectively, including allocation of staff to teach children, occupancy rates of rooms and availability of teaching areas. The council has undertaken a feasibility study in Hillhead High School in partnership with senior staff to find out which classrooms could be used for P7 pupils if this option was approved. Although access to specialist facilities would be helpful for P7 children, it appears unlikely that this benefit could be realised within the current resources of Hillhead High School. If the council chooses to take forward the alternative option, it will need to set out clearly how specialist staff and specialist facilities within Hillhead High School will be used and address the concerns raised by staff.

3.9 The council states that the alternative option has the potential to strengthen learning and partnerships across the appropriate Curriculum for Excellence areas between primary and secondary staff. The council believes the alternative option will create opportunities for primary and secondary staff to develop the curriculum together if they are available at the same time when the P7 children are based in the secondary school. In principle, greater opportunity for collaboration between primary and secondary staff could improve outcomes for children and young people in both

schools. However, the operational details are yet to be worked out. If the council chooses to implement the alternative option, it will need to set out clearly how this potential benefit will be realised.

3.10 The council indicates that the alternative option would create access to space within Hillhead Primary School for each pupil in classrooms vacated by P7 classes when they are at Hillhead High School. Senior managers and staff who spoke to HM Inspectors believe that there is relatively little temporary space to be gained by this arrangement. Whilst some space would be freed up on the days when P7 are at Hillhead High School, the classroom furniture would need to be retained for them to use on their return. Usable space would therefore be limited and much time devoted to moving furniture during the week. If the council chooses to implement the alternative option, it will need to set out clearly in its final consultation report how this potential benefit will be realised.

3.11 The proposal does not set out any educational benefits for young people at Hillhead High School that would arise from the alternative option. Staff, parents and young people have expressed reasonable concerns about this option, through their consultation responses and through discussion with HM Inspectors, including timetabling difficulties and continuity in young people's learning. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out clearly the educational benefits of this option of young people attending Hillhead High School.

4. Summary

4.1 Glasgow City Council's proposal was designed to alleviate the pressure on the capacity of Hillhead Primary School by reducing its catchment area and closing the co-located Kelvin Park Early Years Centre to create more teaching space. As such, the proposal has the potential to address this issue through a managed reduction in the school's roll and the creation of more teaching space within the school. In response to suggestions made during the consultation period, the council provided stakeholders with an alternative option to closing Kelvin Park Early Years Centre. The alternative option proposes Kelvin Park Early Years Centre remains open in its current location and that space is created by moving Hillhead P7 classes to Hillhead High School for two or three days per week.

4.2 There is a mixed response from stakeholders to the proposal. Stakeholders understand that the current capacity issue in Hillhead Primary School cannot continue. They recognise the need to alleviate the pressure on the capacity of Hillhead Primary School. However, there is no clear consensus on the best solution. Stakeholders expressed a number of valid concerns about the educational benefits set out in the proposal paper. In its final consultation report the council will need to address the reasonable concerns expressed by stakeholders. It will need to provide

the reasons for the option it chooses to take forward and set out specific educational benefits for children and young people attending all establishments affected by the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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