

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Moray Council to vary the catchment areas of Buckie High School and Keith Grammar 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 The Moray Council's proposal to vary the catchment areas of Buckie High School and Keith Grammar 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 proposal, 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 proposal for 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:

- 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; and
- visits to the site of Cullen Primary School, Buckie High School and Keith Grammar School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

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

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from 1 February to 17 March 2017. The council held one public meeting at Cullen Primary School on 7 February 2017. Prior to the formal consultation, the council held informal discussions with headteachers of schools concerned and the Cullen Primary School Parent Council. Copies of the proposal document were made available for parents and pupils of all affected schools and information made available to staff, trade union representatives and wider community councils. The council received three written responses and ten responses to an online survey about the proposal. Almost all were supportive of the proposal. Cullen Primary School, Buckie High School and Keith Grammar School also undertook a consultation process with their staff and pupils. All were in favour of the proposal in Cullen Primary School and Buckie High School where no concerns were raised. Staff and pupils from Keith Grammar School raised several concerns against the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Overall, there are clear educational benefits to the proposal. Removing most of the dual-zoning area has the potential to enhance children's transition arrangements. This should enhance the quality of pastoral support available and also ensure further continuity in children's learning and curricular experiences when they move from primary to secondary education. Removing most of the split zone reduces the risk of children experiencing discontinuity in their learning as a result of transition from primary school to a non-Associated Schools Group (ASG) secondary school. Children are more likely to have increased educational and social opportunities throughout their school life to work collaboratively with children from other ASG primary schools. There still remains a small area where there is dual zoning. The council may want to review this in the future to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged in terms of equity. Currently, there are no children who reside in this area.

3.2 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors during their visits to Cullen Primary School and Buckie High School supported the proposal. They reported that last session, all children in the designated areas to be re-zoned opted to attend Buckie High School in August 2016. The headteacher of Cullen Primary School reported that this was also the current situation for those children who live in the designated areas for August 2017. All consultees saw clear advantages to transition arrangements between Cullen Primary School and Buckie High School. They felt that children from these schools could benefit more easily from the broad range of out of school activities and experiences on offer including from community organisations in the areas. All staff, parents and children who met with HM Inspectors commented on the adverse effects which dual zoning could have on existing friendship groups. They felt that having one zoned secondary school to which all pupils transferred at the end of P7 would help address this. Written

responses from consultees from Cullen Primary School and Buckie High School reflected the views noted in this section.

3.3 Consultees at Keith Grammar School are of the view that the proposal will have a negative impact on the school. They are concerned that any reduction in pupil numbers would have an adverse effect on staffing, available course choices and young people's education in general. They are also of the view that the proposal does not reflect accurately what it sets out to do as there is still an area where there is dual zoning. Currently, there are no children residing in this area. In taking its proposal forward, the council needs to continue to engage with stakeholders at Keith Grammar School and provide further clarification in relation to the above concerns, including any arrangements to address these. Written responses from consultees from Keith Grammar School reflected the views noted in this section.

4. Summary

Overall, there are clear educational benefits to the proposal. Removing most of the dual-zoning has the potential to enhance continuity for children's learning. The proposal would help staff to develop further their pastoral and curricular arrangements within the ASG to benefit children's learning between primary and secondary education. In taking its proposal forward, the council needs to continue to engage with stakeholders at Keith Grammar School and provide further clarification in relation to their concerns, including any arrangements to address these and include this information in its final report.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
March 2017**