Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to close Menzieshill High School. The council proposes to close Menzieshill High School. The proposal will also realign the catchment area of Harris Academy to include Menzieshill High School's existing catchment area within Dundee. Rosebank Primary School will be included within the catchment area of Morgan Academy so that children from Rosebank Primary School will transfer to Morgan Academy at the end of P7 instead of Harris Academy. Baldragon Academy will become the associated Dundee secondary school for Longforgan, Inchture, Abernyte, Auchterhouse, Birkhill and Liff Primary Schools. The council plans to implement all aspects of the proposal from August 2016.

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 Dundee City Council's proposal to close Menzieshill High School. The council proposes to close Menzieshill High School. The proposal will also realign the catchment area of Harris Academy to include Menzieshill High School's existing catchment area within Dundee. Rosebank Primary School will be included within the catchment area of Morgan Academy so that children from Rosebank Primary School will transfer to Morgan Academy at the end of P7 instead of Harris Academy. Baldragon Academy will become the associated Dundee secondary school for Longforgan, Inchture, Abernyte, Auchterhouse, Birkhill and Liff Primary Schools. The council plans to implement all aspects of the proposal from August 2016. 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 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 meetings held on 27 January 2015 in Harris Academy and 2 February 2015 in Baldragon Academy in connection with the council's proposals;

- 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 Menzieshill High School, Gowriehill Primary School, Hillside Primary School, Camperdown Primary School, Rosebank Primary School, Harris Academy, Baldragon Academy, Morgan Academy, Longforgan Primary School, Inchture Primary School, Abernyte Primary School, Auchterhouse Primary School, Birkhill Primary School and Liff Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Dundee City 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 consultation on the proposal ran from 12 January to 27 February 2015. During this period the council held five public meetings in a number of schools involved with the proposal. The meetings were generally well attended, with the meeting in Menzieshill High School being very well attended. At these meetings there were mixed reactions about the proposal. The council issued consultation papers to Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council, including children at the primary schools directly affected by the proposal. This did not include Invergowrie Primary School. A number of parents from both council areas attended one or more of the public meetings. The council received 46 written responses to the consultation and almost all were against the proposal. The response from the Menzieshill High School Parent Council included views from a range of stakeholders, all of whom were against the proposal. The council held meetings with children, young people and staff from the Dundee City schools involved in the proposal. While many children and young people saw the benefits of the proposal they too had a number of concerns.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Dundee City Council's proposal to close Menzieshill High School and make associated amendments to the catchment areas of Morgan Academy and Baldragon Academy from August 2016 has a number of overall educational benefits. In particular, elements of the proposal will significantly improve access for many young people in the West of Dundee to a modern learning environment, wireless information and communications technology and a broader curriculum, including access to industry standard vocational learning environments.

3.2 The increased number of staff will provide young people attending Harris Academy and those who would in future be likely to become pupils of Harris Academy with a wider range of learning experiences. It will offer staff the opportunity to augment their own knowledge and expertise within a larger staff team. A larger number of staff will also offer young people access to single level classes in the Senior Phase, providing more flexibility to meet their individual needs. Approximately 350 young people attend Harris Academy as the result of placing requests. The proposed larger catchment area will mean that staff can plan curriculum transitions for almost all of the young people transferring to Harris Academy from P7, helping to improve progression and continuity in learning. Young people requiring additional support will benefit from bespoke facilities and a broader range of expertise amongst teaching staff. From January 2017, children who choose to transfer from the associated primary schools in Perth and Kinross and Angus will benefit from a new learning environment at Baldragon Academy. Many pupils from Rosebank Primary School will benefit from having a shorter distance to travel to their associated secondary school. If the proposal goes ahead, the projected revenue savings are substantial and will enable Dundee City Council to secure best value in the running of its services.

3.3 In Menzieshill High School and Gowriehill, Hillside and Camperdown Primary Schools there were mixed reactions to the proposal. All Menzieshill High School parents who met with HM Inspectors thought that secondary education would be better delivered on the Menzieshill site. The majority of children, young people and staff in Menzieshill High School, and the majority of parents, children, young people and staff in Gowriehill, Hillside and Camperdown Primary Schools, who met with HM Inspectors recognised the educational benefits which the new Harris Academy would provide. They felt that the new learning environment, greater subject choice and more opportunities to work with pupils from a wider socio-economic background would benefit young people. However, they also had a number of concerns with the proposal.

3.4 Many stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were concerned about transition arrangements. Almost all parents, children and staff from Gowriehill, Hillside and Camperdown Primary Schools requested greater clarity in relation to the transition support which would be provided for P6 and P7 children. Currently, there is an extensive programme of transition arrangements in place for children moving from P7 to Menzieshill High School, which includes curricular links, assessment information, and school visits. Stakeholders had reasonable concerns about the lack of clarity regarding the integration of children from Menzieshill High School and

Harris Academy. In its final consultation report, the council needs to set out how it intends to address these concerns

3.5 All stakeholders in the Menzieshill area schools who met with HM Inspectors had concerns about transport arrangements to Harris Academy for children and young people. Under the current arrangements, children who attend Longforgan, Inchture and Abernyte Primary Schools who choose to attend Menzieshill High School and live more than three miles from the school are entitled to free transport to school. The free transport is funded by Perth and Kinross Council. Parents in the associated Perth and Kinross schools wanted a clear statement from Dundee City Council and Perth and Kinross Council on whether this arrangement would continue when children who currently attend Menzieshill High School move to Harris Academy from August 2016. Parents also wanted a similar statement regarding young people from the associated Perth and Kinross schools who might attend Baldragon Academy from August 2016. Stakeholders have reasonable concerns and Dundee City Council needs to continue the discussions it has started with Perth and Kinross Council so that both councils can share any revised travel plans with stakeholders as soon as possible.

3.6 Almost all stakeholders in Menzieshill High School and Harris Academy who met with HM Inspectors had reasonable concerns about the arrangements the council will put in place to ensure an inclusive identity in the enlarged Harris Academy. Also that the council achieves a positive transition for all young people, parents and staff. These include transitional arrangements for curriculum planning, staff development and staff deployment, particularly of senior staff, arising from the proposal. The council will need to work closely with staff, parents, children and young people in addressing these concerns. It will need to set out clearly in its final consultation report how it proposes to address these issues.

3.7 Almost all the community representatives who met with HM Inspectors saw the educational benefits which would be provided by the proposal. However, they had concerns about the sustainability of community engagement activities and the regeneration of the area should Menzieshill High School close. While understanding that many parents from the Menzieshill area choose to send their children to Harris Academy, many community representatives felt there was a perceived disconnection between the regeneration programme and the closure of the secondary school. In addressing this issue, the council needs to assess the impact of the proposal on the local community and set out why it believes the current proposal is the most viable and reasonable option open to it.

3.8 Many stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors had reasonable concerns about perceived inequalities in the proposal. In particular, stakeholders in Rosebank, Longforgan and Inchture Primary Schools were concerned that the new arrangements meant younger siblings might not be educated at the same school as their older brother or sister currently educated at Menzieshill High School. This concern was exacerbated by the fact that Harris Academy would be at near capacity and therefore may not have the flexibility to offer placing requests to siblings. They wanted Dundee City Council to reconsider the proposal and allow younger siblings the opportunity to attend Harris Academy along with their older brother or sister. Parents in Rosebank Primary School raised concerns about the inequality of

allowing Invergowrie Primary School, which is outside Dundee City Council, to remain associated with Harris Academy. Parents in Rosebank Primary School felt it was unfair that an out of authority school would be given priority for places at Harris Academy. In taking the proposal forward, the council needs to work closely with all relevant stakeholders to address these concerns.

3.9 Almost all stakeholders in Baldragon and Morgan Academies who met with HM Inspectors saw the educational benefits of the proposal. Those in Morgan Academy welcomed the increased catchment area. They thought it would improve curricular transitions for larger numbers of pupils in the area. Those in Baldragon Academy welcomed the prospect of an increasing number of pupils and the opportunities this would bring.

3.10 Perth and Kinross Council responded to the consultation. It suggested that three proposals have been merged into one and that the individual proposals are not adequately addressed within the current proposal paper. Angus Council did not provide a formal response to the consultation proposal.

4. Summary

4.1 Overall, Dundee City Council's proposal to close Menzieshill High School and make associated amendments to the catchment areas of Morgan Academy and Baldragon Academy from August 2016 has a number of overall educational benefits. There will be increased opportunities for staff development, self-evaluation and curriculum development. Young people with additional support needs will benefit from an increased range of specialist staff experience and improved bespoke facilities.

4.2 Stakeholders have a range of reasonable concerns. In preparing its final consultation report, Dundee City Council needs to set out reasonable steps to address these concerns. In particular, the council needs to set out how it will address the issues about transport for all young people affected by the proposal. The council needs to provide details on how it intends to ensure effective transitional arrangements for all children and young people who will attend the enlarged Harris Academy. It needs to provide information on the arrangements to be put in place to develop an inclusive identity and meet the needs of all young people attending the enlarged Harris Academy. The council needs to set out more clearly why it believes the current proposal is the most viable and reasonable one for the Menzieshill community. Finally, the council needs to provide more details on arrangements it will put into place for siblings who may wish to attend the same school as their older brother or sister.

HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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