

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to alter the school catchment area boundaries for Greenbrae School and Glashieburn School.

February 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeen City Council's proposal to alter the school catchment area boundaries for Greenbrae School and Glashieburn 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 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.

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 meeting held on 30 November 2022 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 the sites of Glashieburn School and Greenbrae School, including discussion with relevant consultees and visit to the main walking route that children would take to Glashieburn School.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council ran a public consultation from 7 November to 22 December 2022. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders, including parents and children at the two schools. The proposals were also available on the council's website. Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation online or by email. The council received 13 emails and 125 responses to the online form. Almost all of the people that completed the online form disagreed with the proposal, with 121 disagreeing and four agreeing. Of those completing the online form, around half

state they currently have children at one of the schools or have pre-school children. The council held a public meeting at Greenbrae School. This was well attended.

2.3 Stakeholders raised a range of concerns at the public meeting, through completing the online form and in emails. These include the current and projected capacity issues at Greenbrae School. Both those who agree and disagree with the proposal, express concerns about increase in class sizes and non-classroom space being adapted into teaching areas in recent years. A few stakeholders question whether the right area is being considered for rezoning. They mention the recent housing developments in the Sheilhill area and its potential impact on the school roll. Stakeholders would like the council to present and consider alternative solutions. Parents are very worried that this proposal will see children having a longer walk to school on a route that includes a very busy main road. As a result, many are concerned that this proposal will increase the number of parents driving children to school. This has the potential to have negative effects on the roads around Glashieburn School. Stakeholders also raised potential issues from children going to a school outside their community. These included the impacts this may have on friendships and access to out of school activities.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The focus of the consultation is to address capacity issues at Greenbrae School. The school has a capacity of 342, with a pupil roll of 337 this year. However, its roll is projected to increase over the next four years to a peak of 386 in 2025 and 2026. If this proposal is agreed, the council project that this would reduce the roll in the longer term. However, the school would still be over capacity for four years by around 15-25 pupils each year with a peak of 356 in 2025. The school has an extension that opened in 2017. The council is exploring how they can provide further accommodation. However, they state the extent to which this can be provided on the site is limited. Glashieburn School has a capacity of 428 and its current roll is 226. HM Inspectors agree that schools being substantially over capacity can affect the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and create challenges in regard to health and safety.

3.2 Parents, staff and pupils at Greenbrae School who met with HM Inspectors raised that capacity was limited in their school. Due to rising rolls over previous years, Greenbrae School now has limited space for non-classroom activities such as one to one meetings for children receiving individual support from staff and partners. This has the potential to create equalities issues in regard to supporting those children with additional support needs. In addition, activities staff and children would like to have, such as whole school assemblies and shows cannot be accommodated. It is the view of HM Inspectors that regardless of the outcome of this proposal, the council will need to consider further how they can best accommodate the rising roll at Greenbrae School over the coming five years.

3.3 In its proposal, the council states that both schools having more viable and sustainable rolls will support the deployment of staff and a better distribution of children across year groups. HM Inspectors agree that whilst not a necessary condition, having balanced and stable school rolls can help support the planning and delivery of learning and engagement and deployment of staff.

3.4 In the proposal, the council state that the schools having more viable school rolls will help reduce anxiety for parents and pupils in securing a school placement. However, parents including parents of pre-school children who met HM Inspectors at Greenbrae School were clear that this proposal does not fully address their concerns given that the school is still projected to be over capacity. The council states that children in the area affected by the proposal who currently attend Greenbrae School, or who will have a sibling attending Greenbrae School when they start primary school, will have the option to attend Greenbrae School. This is reassuring for children and

parents. However, the stakeholders that HM Inspectors met, raised concerns about children from one community being zoned to different schools and the impact this may have on friendships and community cohesion. A few were also concerned that as this proposal does not fully address capacity issues that further changes may be required to catchment areas and placing requests.

3.5 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are concerned about safe routes to school and the environmental impact of the increased traffic they think will arise from this proposal. The pavement walking route from the communities affected to Glashieburn School crosses a main road. This is a very busy commuter route. If this proposal is agreed, the council will need to demonstrate how they will ensure that children will have a safe walking and cycling route to Glashieburn School. Stakeholders at both schools are concerned about rising school traffic. Neither school have good access and drop off areas. At the start and end of school days, stakeholders report this can cause tension with the local community as parents park their cars in nearby streets. The parents HM Inspectors met stated that children in the Lochside catchment zone affected by this proposal usually walk to school as it is so close, with several of the houses backing onto Greenbrae School playground. They think that if this proposal is agreed, many living in the areas rezoned are likely to drive their children to Glashieburn School, which will increase traffic further.

4. Summary

This proposal principally sets out to address that the school roll at Greenbrae School will exceed capacity in coming years. HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits in addressing the rising roll at Greenbrae School. It is important that schools have sufficient space to support children and deliver a variety of learning and play opportunities. However, this proposal does not fully address the issue of Greenbrae School roll rising above capacity. Whether the proposal is agreed or not, the council will need to demonstrate to stakeholders how they intend to meet this challenge. HM Inspectors are of the view that stakeholders have raised legitimate concerns that the council have still to address, should they intend proceeding with this proposal. The council should take forward risk assessments for ensuring that children have safe routes to Glashieburn School and exploring ways to mitigate traffic congestion around both schools.

**HM Inspectors
February 2023**