

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to adjust the school zone boundaries for Fernielea School, Kingswells School, Hazlehead Academy and the new secondary school being planned at Countesswells.

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 Aberdeen City Council's proposal to adjust the school zone boundaries for Fernielea School, Kingswells School, Hazlehead Academy and the new secondary school being planned at Countesswells. 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:

- 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 Fernielea School, Kingswells School, Bucksburn Academy and Hazlehead Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Aberdeen 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 process ran from 22 August 2016 to 7 October 2016. During this period the council held a public meeting at Hazlehead Academy. Statutory consultees, including Parent Councils of each of the schools involved, were informed of the consultation in writing. Consultation documentation was published on the Aberdeen City Council website and copies were available for public consultation at several venues in the city during the consultation period, including the schools concerned and public libraries. A proforma and an email address were made available for submissions. The council received one email submission which supported its proposal. No one attended the public meeting.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal involves very minor changes to the zone boundaries of the four schools involved and only a very small number of pupils are likely to be affected. The proposal would mean that any pupils who may reside in the small areas of land covered by the proposed changes would now no longer require to cross the busy A944 Langstracht road in order to walk to school. The proposal also means that all children in the proposed Maidencraig south-east development would be entitled to attend Fernielea School and Hazlehead Academy. This has the potential to enable the Maidencraig south-east area to develop its own sense of community and to help children and young people in this area to settle confidently into their new schools. The proposal will lead to very minor changes to the school rolls of the affected schools. It offers educational benefits to those children and young people who may reside in the areas covered by the proposal.

3.2 All parents, pupils and staff who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. Although the proposal is likely to affect a very small number of learners, there is widespread agreement that the small changes to the zone boundaries make good sense.

4. Summary

Aberdeen City Council's proposal to make the very minor changes to the zone boundaries of the four schools identified in its proposal has clear educational benefits. Although only a very small number of children or young people are likely to be directly affected, the proposal addresses issues of providing a safe walking route to school and is likely to help promote the new Maidencraig housing development's

own sense of identity. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree with the proposal. In taking its proposal forward, the council should clarify any arrangements which it may have in place for the younger siblings of any children who reside in the small areas of land affected by the proposal at the time of implementation.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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