

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to remove an area of dual zoning for Fernielea School and Hazlehead School and to include this area within the zone for Hazlehead School only, from 1 August 2017.

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 remove an area of dual zoning for Fernielea School and Hazlehead School and to include this area within the zone for Hazlehead School only, from 1 August 2017. 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 and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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; and
- visits to the site of Fernielea School and Hazlehead School, 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 statutory consultation period ran from 22 August 2016 to 7 October 2016. The proposal document was issued to appropriate stakeholders and copies were also made available at a range of locations in the vicinity of the schools affected. It was also made available on the Aberdeen City Council website and offered in a range of languages on request. A public meeting was held at 7 pm on 21 September 2016 at Hazlehead School. No members of the public attended this meeting. Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation by completing and sending in a form attached to the proposal, by writing to the council or by sending an email. No responses were received to the consultation.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council justifiably considers that school rolls will be sustainable and viable in this area if the proposal is implemented, and that this will ensure that effective teacher staffing levels are maintained. This will have clear educational benefit for the children at both schools involved.

3.2 There is significant educational benefit in allowing children to attend the school which is geographically closest to their home, helping the schools to maintain a clear and distinct association with their local communities. These communities will be better defined if the proposal is implemented.

3.3 Children, young people and staff at Fernielea School and Hazlehead School are in favour of the proposal and do not find any aspect of it controversial. They are reassured that children who live in the dual zone will still be able to attend Fernielea School, and that their siblings will be able to join them, keeping families together. They also approve of the clarity which will result from the removal of the dual zone.

4. Summary

This proposal has clear educational benefits which are accepted and endorsed by stakeholders. It will remove ambiguity in relation to catchment areas and will clarify the communities served by each of the schools.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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