

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the following proposals by Aberdeen City Council. Proposal 1: remove the area of dual school zoning for Broomhill School and Airyhall School, and to include this area within the zone for Broomhill School only, from 1 August 2017.

Proposal 2: to remove an area of dual school zoning from Broomhill School and Ferryhill School, and to include this area within the zone for Ferryhill 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 the area of dual school zoning for Broomhill School and Airyhall School, and to include this area within the zone for Broomhill School only, from 1 August 2017. Also to remove an area of dual school zoning from Broomhill School and Ferryhill School, and to include this area within the zone for Ferryhill School only, from 1 August 2017.

1.2 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.

1.3 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of Broomhill School, Ferryhill School and Airyhall School; 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.

1.4 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 18 May 2016 at Broomhill School 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 Broomhill School, Ferryhill School and Airyhall School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 9 May 2016 until 20 June 2016. The council posted the consultation document on its website. Copies of the document were distributed to local libraries and made available at Broomhill School, Ferryhill School and Airyhall School. Notice of the issuing of the proposal document was issued to parents of every pupil in attendance at Broomhill School, Ferryhill School and Airyhall School and to all parent council groups. In addition the consultation document was issued to council officers, Members of the Scottish Parliament, the Member of Parliament for the area and to Education Scotland.

2.3 Eighteen stakeholders attended a public meeting at Broomhill School on 18 May 2016. A number of concerns were raised by those present relating to the proposals. These included children having to undertake longer journeys and having to cross major roads at peak times. The council received 13 written responses from interested parties relating to Proposal 1. More than half were not supportive. The main concerns expressed related to increased distance, the safety of children in relation to crossing major roads and also the potential negative impact on local house prices. A written submission on behalf of Airyhall Parent Council queried the statistical data provided, in particular the lack of clarity regarding the numbers of children from the current dual zone who currently attend Airyhall School and Broomhill School. In terms of Proposal 2 the council received two written responses. These did not support the proposal citing road safety concerns relating to children crossing a major road and also increased distance to travel to Ferryhill in comparison to current distance to Broomhill.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council has set out a reasonable case for the proposed changes to the school zoning for Broomhill, Ferryhill and Airyhall Schools. In arriving at its proposals it gave good consideration to the significant housing developments in and around the Countesswells Road area to ensure sufficient capacity at Airyhall School. It also gave good consideration to current and planned occupancy at Broomhill

School and Ferryhill School to make best use of availability capacity. Proposals 1 and 2 will help the council secure best value by addressing capacity issues in its school estate. There is no detriment for families with children currently attending Broomhill, Ferryhill and Airyhall Schools. It ensures all three schools, in particular Airyhall School work within capacity in the coming year. It also ensures each school has sustainable and viable pupil rolls which will allow schools to plan accordingly and ensure effective teacher staffing numbers and learning and teaching is maintained.

3.2 A very small number of parents from Broomhill and Ferryhill Schools met with HM Inspectors. Overall they were supportive of both proposals. They liked that the zones would now be clearer. Parents from both schools thought Proposal 1 would offer children in the current dual zone area safe access to Broomhill School along a well maintained route. They did not see any negative impact on Broomhill School as the number of houses in the dual zone areas were reasonably small. Ferryhill Parent Council were supportive of Proposal 2. However, both Broomhill and Ferryhill parents acknowledged concerns regarding the safety of children who walk to school having to cross Great Southern Road under Proposal 2. Broomhill School parents queried the validity of the pupil projection data relating to the proposals. The lack of information on how many children from the dual zone areas currently attend Broomhill and Ferryhill Schools was seen to be unhelpful.

3.3 A very small number of parents from Airyhall School met with HM Inspectors. They felt Proposal 1 would help address potential capacity issues within Airyhall School as a result of current and planned housing developments. The Parent Council had received seven objections from parents. A key issue was the safety of children travelling from the current dual zone area on foot or cycle to Broomhill School.

3.4 All management, teaching and support staff from Broomhill, Ferryhill and Airyhall Schools who met with HM Inspectors supported both the proposals. They did not see any negative impact on either staff or existing pupils. They acknowledged that all three schools currently have capacity to accommodate any additional numbers the proposed zoning changes might generate. However, Broomhill School staff expressed concerns about the safety of children walking on a busy road to Ferryhill School under Proposal 2.

3.5 Children at Broomhill School who met with HM Inspectors were not fully aware of the proposals. Whilst they welcomed the opportunity to make new friends they expressed concerns about Broomhill School's ability to accommodate more children due to current class sizes. They were also concerned about the impact any changes might have on children being able to walk to school safely.

4. Summary

4.1 The council's proposals are of educational benefit in the long term. Proposals 1 and 2 will help the council secure best value by addressing capacity issues in its school estate. There is no detriment for families with children currently attending Broomhill, Ferryhill and Airyhall Schools. It ensures all three schools, in particular Airyhall School, work within capacity in the coming year. It also ensures each school has sustainable and viable pupil rolls which will allow schools to plan

accordingly and ensure effective teacher staffing numbers and learning and teaching is maintained.

4.2 In its final consultation report, the council needs to offer reassurance to existing parents in the former dual zone areas who already have children at all three schools and also have younger children about future choices. The council should also take steps to allay the concerns of parents and children by ensuring safe routes to schools where children will have to cross major roads. It should also address the lack of clarity regarding the specific numbers of children from the current dual zone who currently attend Ferryhill School, Airyhall School and Broomhill School and share this information with parent bodies.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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