

Middleton Park School Staff
Statutory Consultation Submission

October 2013

This is a collaborative response from the staff of Middleton Park School

Submission regarding the Statutory Consultation Process to -

- a) Close Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and establish an amalgamated school within the existing Glashieburn building and campus
- b) Vary the delineated (catchment) area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy

The staff at Middleton Park School are strongly opposing the proposal.

Having scrutinised the Educational Benefits, it has been very difficult to find any supporting evidence that would suggest the proposed amalgamation would be beneficial to either school. The statements are subjective, open to interpretation and would apply to over one quarter of Aberdeen City Council's schools. Many of the statements are derogatory to all the schools of a similar size. These statements are not reflected in the very positive HMIE inspections in recent schools of similar size.

The process of consultation has been confusing and at times misleading. There have been contradictory statements both within the report and in communication with stakeholders. During the consultation period, goal posts have moved and indeed, at times, the information presented has been changed. This has caused increased stress, anxiety and uncertainty. At some of the statutory consultations, minutes have not been taken, resulting in misunderstandings and at times, misrepresentation of stakeholders' views.

The school enjoys excellent working relationships with our enthusiastic, supportive and determined parent body. We would welcome the opportunity to work together on alternative and sustainable proposals for the benefits of the pupils.

There is confusion about the re-zoning proposals.
e.g. Development at Shielhill. We were told that Scotia are building 450 houses. This is actually going to be 551 with Barratt's about to apply for a further 74 and a third developer in the offing. This questions the ability to zone pupils to Greenbrae and will impact on the other schools in the ASG. This makes us question the validity of the zoning accuracy in the report.

Indoor Space

There are serious concerns about the lack of space at the amalgamated school. It has been difficult to ascertain the correct figures because of inaccurate information. However, the latest figures show that in the new school, each child will have 0.9 metres less space than they currently enjoy in their present school.

With the present information, we are unsure of the actual footprint of the school. However the high quality delivery of Curriculum for Excellence will be adversely affected and of a diminished quality in the amalgamated school.

The lack of Hall space will not allow the delivery of our current Health and Wellbeing programme. The pupils will have a decrease in high quality learning experiences delivered in-house and by external partners including Dance Tutors, Active Schools, Kids in Condition Trainers, Sports Coaches and partners from Aberdeen College, RGU and the University of Aberdeen. These opportunities not only allow us to deliver two hours quality PE within our school but gives confidence to our pupils to take these skills into other areas of their lives outwith the school environment

The lack of Hall Space will curtail the excellent practice of Assemblies, Sharing of Learning across the school, Get togethers and Pupil Led Assemblies. Currently these underpin our positive behaviour management as well as providing excellent pupil leadership opportunities.

The lack of Hall Space will greatly limit the delivery of events and celebrations for the parent body and wider community - e.g. Concerts, Showcase Events, Eco Fashion Shows, Science Workshops, Puppet Shows, visits from Scottish Opera, End of Year Celebrations. At present at least 3 such events take place each term providing rich and high quality learning experiences for the pupils. These are greatly valued by pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.

The reduced flexible learning spaces will diminish rich opportunities for active learning, personalisation and choice. There will be fewer opportunities for pupils from different classes to work collaboratively, exemplifying the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence. At present our flexible learning spaces are used for Interdisciplinary Learning challenges, pupil led learning, paired reading across stages, food technology, pupil led science challenges, interactive displays and master classes. This is invaluable in developing our present curriculum which is coherent, flexible and enriched.

Outdoor Space

We have grave concern that the outdoor space in the amalgamated school is not large enough to meet the needs of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Historically, when Glashieburn had a larger school roll, they utilised the space at Middleton Park School for Sports Day. This was because they did not have a large enough outdoor space to host their own Sports Day. Delivering Curriculum for Excellence today, the outdoor space is not only used for an annual sports day but is in daily use. Examples include regular whole school sports events, community picnics and scavenger hunts. The outdoor space is used constantly as an extended outdoor classroom with a myriad of high quality learning experiences taking place.

This space also allows children's individual needs to be met - e.g. pupils with specific learning needs are allowed to have the space to ensure they can feel safe and included during outdoor breaks. The space allows nurture groups at breaktimes to be established. The outdoor area in the amalgamated school will not allow this to happen to the same extent.

Free-flow Nursery Space

"...free access to stimulating outdoor environment young children should be outdoors as much as indoors preferably with indoors and outdoors available simultaneously integrated indoor-outdoor environment." Early Years: Visions and values for outdoor play published by Learning through landscapes (Grounds for learning) 21.07.10

We are in the enviable position of being able to meet these visions and values:

- we do not have to timetable the use of the outdoor area because it is a dedicated and safe and secure nursery space
- reduced numbers means space and freedom outdoors for our children and calmer learning environments both indoors and outdoors
- the children can play for long periods of time in their preferred learning environment giving them real personalisation and choice and time to develop their play

At present the site at Glashieburn does not offer this facility and any such provision would take away from the already limited outdoor space.

Staff Collaboration

In the 21st century, transfer of skills, knowledge, information, learning and expertise is no longer limited to a physical building or to peer colleagues within one establishment or one city. Learning now takes place within a global learning community, enhanced through effective use of technology, and allowing many opportunities for collegiate learning across classes, schools, authorities and nations. Self-evaluation is embedded in our current practice, empowering staff to be bold and confident in their delivery and sharing of the experiences and outcomes of the Curriculum of Excellence.

This is an area of strength for our staff community.

Collaboration with staff at a school in Shetland to create an innovative learning context for pupils at both schools and culminating with GLOW meets and a national GLOW CPD delivered together from both schools

Collaboration with a school in Yorkshire through email and a GLOW meet to discuss use of video links to enhance partnership between school and parents

Video links with professionals in Edinburgh to establish links with a school in West Africa. Once the link is established, pupils and staff will communicate through video links to share knowledge and skills as well as exchange cultural differences

Exchange of ideas between our present Primary 3 class and a class in Washington DC. Teachers and pupils communicated through emails, letters and video links.

Learner's Experiences and the Curriculum

The following exemplify the school's innovative and collaborative approach to the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. A broad range of pedagogical approaches already exist. Embedded in our practice is the use of current research as well as our own action research. It is difficult to perceive how the amalgamation will enhance our current practice.

The school was invited to present our Science Journey at the Scottish Learning Festival in Glasgow in September 2013. Feedback from the audience confirmed our the Journey to Excellence in Science. This further shows our ability to communicate with professionals nationally and globally and have a purposeful dialogue of mutual benefit both to our pupil's learning as well as to other schools. However we are also very effective at sharing our learning with our local community e.g. Showcase events at our local superstore and in-house CPD.

Our calendar of pupil led initiatives is regularly evaluated and refreshed to meet the aspirations of our school community. These include Pupil Leadership Academy, Pupil Led Assemblies, Kids in Condition, Middleton Matters, Website Weavers and Primary 7 Buddies. These all enhance pupils' engagement in their own learning and provide them with a genuine voice and an authentic audience for their own learning. A growing portfolio of videos, photos and podcasts exemplify the positive impact of the pupil's learning experiences and these are regularly shared across the school and with parents through our Live Learning section on the school website.

We have shared our practice with many interested schools as well as gleaming information from others. Examples of new initiatives developed through research, visits and discussion with other professionals include Forest Schools, Master Classes, Science Technicians, School Blogs and the development of the school website.

In summary, the proposal does not articulate that a move to an amalgamated school will have any increased educational benefit to our pupils. We would welcome the opportunity to work with council officials and our parent body on alternative and sustainable proposals for the benefits of our pupils and the wider community.