

## **Responses to Statutory Consultation on Bramble Brae and Quarryhill**

### **Aug – Oct 2013**

The following comments and views have been received in connection with the Aberdeen City Council proposal

To close Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools and to establish a new amalgamated school within the existing Quarryhill building and campus.

These views and comments do not necessarily represent the views of Aberdeen City Council.

**27/8/13**

I am a parent of two children whom attend Bramble bare and have serious concerns about closing the school.

The school is the heart of the community and a special place from pupils and parents

By closing the school you would be forcing my children to walk a greater distance than is physically possible for my son's medical condition

And a busy road (Provost Fraser drive) that has had several road accidents with fatal consequences

I also believe the school will be over capacity and affect my children's education

Please do not rip the heart of a close community apart

**28/8/13**

I am a Bramble Brae parent of 4 children that attend the school at present, I also have 2 older boys that attended the school as well I have much concerns about this merge, my first is the safety aspect of Provost Fraser Drive that road is very busy and as you may be aware i did apply for the road accidents under the foi act just to see how much accidents have been on that stretch of road especially at the points where my children will have to cross. Secondly the gradient of the hills we will have to walk daily either Granitehill Road or Cummings Park Circle. Myself and my daughter are both asthmatic`s and I personally will find it difficult walking up both of them pushing a buggy and my 3yr walking so has peoples health been taken into this? And also i will have to make that walk 3 times a day as i will have a little one in nursery.

I know you are new to the area of Aberdeen but we get some really bad winters and as we live on one of the steepest hills in Aberdeen I am going to find this really hard to walk, bus is not an option as it would cost me £40 a week on bus fares and this is just not possible with other expenses of day to day living, And i dont have access to a car.

I'm also worried about classroom sizes as they will be a lot bigger than what our children are used to the teachers wont have the same time to pick up on the childrens issues. With Bramble Brae being a small school staff have time to pick up on these issues and also offer a 1-1 with the children and i feel this will not work in a larger enviroment. What will the kids gain with a larger class size? Myself

personally think my little boy in p3 is going to struggle attending a larger school and i am worried about this. Bramble brae has

an excellent standard of education which i'm sure Quarryhill does aswell.

I'm going to get a bit sentimental here but my eldest son attended Quarryhill in p1-p2 and then Smithfield p2-p3 before moving to Bramble Brae he had been excluded from both schools and i was worried about his education i then moved him to Bramble Brae half way through p3 where Mr baxter and all the teaching staff really helped my son gain the confidence in himself that he could succeed in life and that he could make the right choices, my son has now left school with excellent grades and has signed up to the army and he thanks the staff for that. I just feel like they pushed him in the right direction I know this may not mean much to you but it means the world to me that in a smaller school my son succeeded.

Bramble brae is the heart of community we meet up there twice a week to discuss local issues, if you take this away we are left with nothing we are just another council estate and i don't want this for my kids. Everybody in the area knows everyone and all the kids if theres a problem the kids will tell us and we are just not going to have the same rapore if the school is taken away.

I hope i have gave you some insight into our little but big community and i urge you to reconsider this merge thank you .

4/9/13

I am a parent of a primary one child who attends bramble brae - also I'm part of the parent council.

I think this closing one school and making another a tad bit bigger for said school to attend is just ridiculous, waste of time. Both schools are doing well on their own, it's been said its not to do with money for the closure of bramble brae so why do it?!

Quarryhill is a fair walk for any child not to mention the kids with asthma, ADHD, autistic etc! These and many more do not like walking, not all parents drive either. They are our children we should be the ones to make sure they get to school safe and well, but this main road business is horrendous! Talk about getting a few mothers to take a group of kids there and back and swapping parents the next day, car owners to be taken other parents kids to for from school. If anything was to happen on this journey via car the said car owner is not insured for being a "car pull"

The road is a major issue for a lot of us parents and carers of bramble brae as well - it's not safe even with the islands every so often! Lolly pop person is only there morning and after school, kids that go home for lunch aren't safe to cross (older kids on their own) its a very long road and kids from all over the northfield area would be expected to attend this "new school" where they've to cross a very busy road, yes mark macdonald walk from bramble brae to quarryhill and it took him 20 minuets - he was on his own with no child. Maybe you should get someone else to do this with a child aged 5-6 and the. Come back and tell us how long you like it would take! In the winter the poor kids will have to leave so early to add 10 more minuets to their journey in the dark may I add!

It was brought to my attention about buses?! Not a chance. Per child £1.10 one way five days a week total of £11 but also we have the parents journey as well of £2.20 each way but parents would half to do it 4 times in one day?! That would be £4.10 a day £20.50 a week!. Where on earth would we get such money? Not even most working parents could afford that!

Takes to my next issue - getting back to work!

How can anyone get back to work with all this running about to do in a day? Contradicting springs to mind "by the time your child is in full time education you should be back to work" not even plausible.

I myself suffer from asthma and son being treated for ADHD as his parent I know he would not walk that and buses is just not a question.

Our kids, grandkids are happy - there is so much benefits to having a small school. It's suited just fine for all kids and any needs that may be needed. Bramble brae have access to all rooms for if ever there is a wheel chair needed. For example over the sports day before summer break one child had to use a wheel chair and had not one problem getting to/in school or any class needed by herself or class!

Quarryhill doesn't have this access, only if your in the lower half of the school. Our school (bramble brae) doesn't need upgrading, new windows - but how can we get these when everywhere you go or look there is this closure of the school?

Also saying we "bramble brae" have less pupils that we should, manor park is over, heathryburn is over. Why not send some to use? If your plans are to put more homes up you'll need all the school pace possible?

I think it's funny how you can tell how many pupils bramble brae will have in two year? There is and I know loads of homes here away to become empty and these are 2,3 and 4 bed houses. So obviously families will move in what means more kids for the school? Yes, yes it does!

As I say above bramble brae is accessible. You keep contradicting yourself. You quote "Quarryhill school is under-occupied and can provide sufficient places to accommodate all current and future pupils from bramble brae. The facilities both internally and in particularly externally and better at quarryhill, making it a better learning environment for children and improved working conditions for staff"

1: it's not all what it says, the school is not fit for disabled access!

2: by the way the school looks "better" than bramble brae means kids will learn better from it? What a crock of rubbish! Looks have nothing to do with it! Bramble brae is a fantastic school, kids are super, teacher a lovely. Couldn't ask for anything better! The kids love everything about it teacher, worts and all!

As always you "the council" always have something up your sleeve. And it is a utter horrid shame that bramble brae is part of this plan! Kids will be devastated!

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My name is "Your Name" i attended the above school prior to going onto secondary school. I strongly feel that Bramble Brae should remain open for a couple of reasons.

It may be a small school but everyday i went there i felt welcome and i always smiled, due to the teachers not only knowing my name but who i actually was. My teacher got my sense of humour and not only did i learn writing reading and spelling, I also was learned to be my self no matter what happens in the big school. All my brothers went to Brambles (name of school) but they also know my mum. If i ever had any problems i could go to the headmaster and explain what was the matter, and he fixed it.As a kid i spend most of my time at school and if it wasn't for the close family in school i don't think i would be respectful and want to learn. I still go back to Brambles to visit and their disco's. No other school allows that, and i still feel that i can go to Mr Baxter with my problems now .

Thank you for reading

5/9/13

I have a child who goes to quarryhill nursery, and I myself do not see the positives from the two schools merging. I feel the school is fine as is. To move children from one school to another is a confusing process for some children and it would also be leaving most parents to travel the extra distance between home and school. I also feel that this would be a bad descion due to the chance of over populating the school causing less time for teachers to pay attention to the needs of certain children, again I feel quarryhill primary school is fine the way it is.

7/9/13

I am a parent of a child who currently attends Bramble Brae school and am deeply concerned about this proposal. I am certain that this merger would not be of any educational value whatsoever to the children.

This council is only ever concerned about cutting costs and never with the welfare of its people. The safety of these children would at great risk as they would have to cross an extremely busy road, which has already suffered from several fatalities, at least twice a day. You may say there will be a lollipop person on duty but they cannot be at every crossover section at the same time and what if they were off or the children were late? This very busy road has no speed restrictions, no speed bumps, no safe crossing areas, and cars go tearing down at all speeds.

The reasons you give for closing Bramble Brae are all financial and you give no good argument of any educational value because there is none!

Bramble brae is a fantastic school with fantastic staff which is in the heart of a tight knit community. Closing this school down would therefore rip the heart out of this community.

10/9/13

I am writing to give my objections to the merger of bramble brae and quarryhill schools. I am a parent of bramble brae and feel that if you take away our school which is the heart of the community our children will have nothing their new school will me a long distance for them to walk and they wont have the same connection with the teaching staff as we do already its more of a family feel to the school which you just don't get in a larger school and i know your thinking how would i know this but my eldest attended a large primary school she has learning difficulties which was not picked up on until she was in primary 6 i just feel that a smaller school has a closer relationship with the kids that they pick up on things a lot quicker. I am not downing quarryhill as a school i just have a lot of passion for our local school the safety aspect fears me aswell as i have grew up in northfield and lived here for 38 years and i know how dangerous provost fraser drive is

I urge you to reconsider this merge as i don't find it beneficial to a regeneration area

thank you a concerned parent

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quarryhill doesnt do breakfast club and bramble brae do and most of the parents who work rely on this. Quarryhill will be a trek for some parents that have babies and tots to get ready in the morning the kids are going to be too tired to consenstrate all day due to being up earlier in the morning and too tired to do homework as it will be a very long day for them the children are going to lose out on the security of their school and other parents looking out for them if theres a problem you can phone mrs gray in the office anytime to let her know if a child has left the ploayground as everyone knows all the children in the area by first name i dont think my little sister who has asthma will manage the walk up

that steep hill every morning and her health and school work will reflect this please dont close our community school from a worried sister

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I am really concerned about the proposed merger between bramble brae and quarryhill. The road which my p1 has to cross is one of the main roads in Aberdeen there is alot of hgv lorries using this road alot of them carry explosive's,flammable and dangerous goods to Howes estate, there has been a few pedestrians been knocked over.

The hill which i will have to walk up is steep. My daughter will have a long school day the time we walk up and back from school. Are you even considering our wider community our school is the heart of our community you take our school you take our heart our shops will suffer as the school children wont use them the same. I went to bramble brae so did my younger brother and my 14 yr old son went there we loved and still do love our little school . Don't take our community school away.

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Good morning, my little son just started nursery at Bramble Brae and he is enjoying it. He has settled into the environment and coping with the idea of his new school , what it looks like etc, a familiar place to him.

To consider uprooting him and many other children from familiar territory to an unfamiliar environment would cause major set backs in their learning process.

Not forgetting the close proximity of having the school near to our homes, Especially in winter months getting the children to school with peace of mind, not having to depend on buses for transport.

Its just not what we want for our children, to merge with Quarry hill , we hope and wish that you the council would reconsider your options. For most children Bramble Brae is the only school they know and trust and to start over it would have a great impact on their learning experience .

Yours Gratefully  
Concern Parents

25/9/2013

I would like to express my objections to the proposed amalgamation of Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary schools. I feel that this proposal is based principally on financial considerations with little or no regard to the value of schools to the pupils, families and community. I also feel that the proposals are largely made on the back of several baseless assumptions and predictions.

The profiles for Bramble Brae and Quarryhill appear to be very similar – no housing developments planned or expected, many owner-occupied, similar retention rates (Bramble Brae slightly higher). Yet in the overall rise predicted for the Aberdeen city population Quarryhill's roll is predicted to rise while Bramble Brae will fall. This prediction does not seem robust enough to base this amalgamation on. This is particularly so given the actual statistics at present; if all Bramble Brae pupils (155 or 160) moved to Quarryhill (according to the school profile it is currently 247, although the figure of 206 is used for the predictions), the total roll would be over capacity. This leaves no margin for error in school roll predictions and a real risk of the school becoming overcrowded in the very near future. When my daughters joined Bramble Brae, part way through P1, we were initially informed – by the council – that the class sizes had been capped at 18, but it had already went over this. Since they started, another two pupils have joined the class. This appears to contradict your prediction that the roll will go down. In fact, the likeliest cause of a falling school roll will be the uncertainty and worry created by this proposal.

The benefits created by a larger school can easily be weighed against the benefits of a small school where teachers know all the pupils well, and pastoral care can be delivered on an individual basis. Schools are not just about getting an education, they are also important for personal and social development too. It is clear that Bramble Brae provides in all of these areas with many - if not all - families at Bramble Brae valuing the sense of community that Bramble Brae provides. The teachers, including the head teacher Mr Baxter, appear to know all of the pupils in the school by name, and likewise the pupils all seem to know each other well, from P1 through to P7. This lends itself to a great sense of security and strong social development for the children, likely to do wonders for their self-confidence. This cannot be replicated in a larger school where teachers and pupils cannot possibly be expected to know everyone so well. How can there possibly be greater “emphasis on innovation and personalisation rather than on standardisation” in a larger school than in a smaller one?

The loss of advantages brought about by the mixing of age cohorts and familiarity amongst the primary levels is unlikely to be mitigated by the argument that larger schools provide more opportunities. Age cohorts at a larger school would continue to be divided into classes of roughly the same as they are now at the proposed amalgamated school. It is highly unlikely that the classes will be mixed and changed over for each activity undertaken, so the same issues of differing abilities will continue as before. In fact, a larger school is more likely to have composite classes. There also seems to be a lot of baseless assumptions made on a larger school increasing motivation and attendance simply by virtue of having more pupils and teachers.

My daughters are now in P2 and they are thriving. It would be a great shame if they had to go through the disruption of moving school and adjusting to such a different environment. The closure of Bramble Brae School would be a real loss to the community and the families in the area. But more importantly, it will be a great loss for the pupils who gain so much from this small and friendly school.

29/9/2013

PARENT COUNCIL MEETING – 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF QUARRYHILL AND BRAMBLE BRAE SCHOOLS

1. THE NURSERY AT QUARRYHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL IS NOT BIG ENOUGH FOR THE EXISTING AREA AND THE WAITING LIST CAN CURRENTLY BE UP TO 15 CHILDREN.
2. DOES THE AMALGAMATION AFFECT OUR PLANS FOR THE GROUNDS FOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENT?
3. CAN ANY ALTERATIONS TO THE SCHOOL BE DONE IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS?
4. WORRIED ABOUT ANY CONFLICT BETWEEN CHILDREN FROM THE TWO SCHOOLS
5. WORRIED THAT ANY DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCHOOL WOULD MEAN THAT WE MIGHT LOOSE OUR BASE, LIBRARY, GP3 (USED FOR MUSIC AND DRAMA) AND NURTURE ROOM
6. TOO FAR FOR THE CHILDREN TO WALK TO SCHOOL FROM BRAMBLE BRAE AND IT IS NOT SAFE FOR THEM TO CROSS THAT VERY BUSY ROAD. EVEN IF CROSSING IS INSTALLED, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE CHILDREN WOULD USE IT.
7. HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE GRADES THAT CHILDREN WILL ATTAIN AT THE SCHOOL AS THE TEACHERS WILL NOT HAVE THE SAME TIME TO SPEND WITH OUR CHILDREN AS THE CLASS SIZES WE BE AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY. WILL

TEACHERS HAVE TIME TO HELP ANY CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING? THINK CHILDREN WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO ASK FOR HELP IN A BIG CLASS.

8. WITH NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND IMMIGRANTS, WHERE ARE ALL THESE CHILDREN GOING TO GO IF WE LOOSE ANOTHER SCHOOL?
9. WORRIED ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE KIDS AT BRAMBLE BRAE AFFECTING OUR CHILDREN AT QUARRYHILL AND VICE VERSA
10. WILL THE SCHOOLS BUDGET REFLECT THE INCREASE IN PUPILS
11. UNHAPPY FOR THE SCHOOL NAME TO CHANGE ESPECIALLY IN THE SCHOOLS 60TH YEAR BUT ALSO DUE TO UNNECESSARY EXPENSE FOR PARENTS AT BOTH SCHOOLS. OUR SCHOOL HAS RECENTLY INVESTED TIME AND MONEY ON OUR AIMS AND LOGO, WE DON'T WANT TO LOOSE THEM.

1/10/2013

I live in the catchment zone for Bramble Brae and attended the school induction in June this year. I was most impressed by the activities on offer and the efforts by all the staff to ensure that school is a positive experience for all pupils. It is clear from observing the children and staff interacting that there is a culture of family nurtured in Bramble Brae which I fear would be lost if the Council proposals go ahead.

As a parent, I found the school application process complex and at times difficult to understand, however the headteacher and office staff were most helpful and and gave me lots of support.

I cannot understand that there would be any educational benefit to children at either Bramble Brae or Quarryhill following an amalgamation. Whilst there are safety aspects to consider regarding the journey Bramble Brae pupils will have to make to Quarryhill, there is another concern that I wish to raise.

Many children attending Bramble Brae are from families requiring significant social work support. I fear the additional turmoil of school closure would have a negative impact on these families, resulting in decreased compliance with school attendance. No efforts to save money on the Council's part is worth the risk to these children's education and a failure to recognise this by the Council demonstrates their lack of commitment to supporting such families.

I hope to attend one of the meetings organised in the local area and wish to support the school in any other way I can.

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my daughter attends Bramble Brae Primary School. I find that this proposed closure & merger with another school outwith the boundary line of Cummings Park is simply a way to save the council money and provide the Finacial Benefits to a department where, I find that closing Bramble Brae serves no purpose apart from a simple box ticking excersise.

Why you would want to close a small multi award winning school is beyond me, It is illogical in every sense of the word comparable evidence proves that this will prove detrimental not only to my daughter but her friends & classmates.

I urge you to simply do away with the idea as it is not in their best interest where sentimentality of it being a community school plays no part in the providing of the Educational Benefit required.

2/10/2013

After having attended two recent Public Consultation Meetings (PCM) with regards the above proposal I have no alternative but to pen my concerns with regards, in my opinion, this idiotic financially motivated idea.

As a mother of two Bramble Brae pupils I have always encouraged my children to stand up for their beliefs, be honest and if they think someone is being bullied, picked on, or ill treated they must inform/report this to a responsible adult/teacher. After having been on the receiving end of the Aberdeen City Council (ACC) four panel members (Derek Samson, Jenny Laing, Gail Gorman & Charlie penman), I feel that the pupils of Bramble Brae, and indeed the Cummings Park community, are being ill treated and picked on. I found the panel members to be very "matter of fact", cold and uninterested in our concerns. I have now had the opportunity to peruse the Public Consultation Document and this in fact poses more questions than answers.

As noted Bramble Brae currently has over 60% capacity and as stated in legislation schools over this capacity level should not be considered for closure!

In recent years there has been many incidents involving pedestrians trying to cross Provost Fraser Drive, one of these incidents resulting in the fatality of a 13-year old girl in February 2011. As this road is a main feeder road from the A90 (North Anderson Drive) I feel the safety of our children has been majorly overlooked.

In earlier years when Bramble Brae was previously under threat of closure and a proposed amalgamation with Middlefield Primary School it was deemed that Provost Rust Drive was too busy and unsafe for our children to cross. However, Provost Fraser Drive is busier than provost Rust Drive!

Also as documented in national statistics Cummings Park is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland with many families living below the government threshold for financial hardship. Many of these families will have children in attendance at Bramble Brae and by closing their school you are in fact making these children's lives more difficult, in terms of longer school days due to travelling longer distances. These "deprived children" may already face negative issues at home and within their community and by taking away their school safeguard you are making these fragile lives more challenging.

Having myself come from a 2-tier primary school I had never experienced the likes a 1-tier school prior to my first involvement with Bramble Brae back in 2009. I was completely overwhelmed by the friendliness and open-door approach shown by our community school and all members of staff, both past and present. Bramble Brae is a community school for our community children, by closing Bramble Brae you would also be shutting down the growth of our children's future and capping their education and intelligence.

Bramble Brae has shown on numerous occasions how they continue to achieve high standards despite its location within the heart of one of Scotland's most deprived areas. As stated within the Public Consultation Document, P30, section 5.1.15, paragraph 8, it reads "Most pupils at Bramble Brae school achieve, and in some cases, exceed milestones in their level of attainment." Similarly, yet again, and as printed in the Evening Express on 01/10/2013, Bramble Brae has recently won the John Baillie Porter Award for top results in Aberdeen for Performance Indicators in Primary School.

Another issue that concerns me is with regards breakfast club and school finishing times. When I took the conscious decision to be a "working mother", I purposely sought employment where with my

children could attend breakfast club and be provided with a healthy, nutritious breakfast and where I could personally collect my children from school at the end of the school day, 3.15pm. Currently Quarryhill have no breakfast club facilities and an earlier finishing time. I made the decision to be a "working mother" in order to be a good role model for my children and in order to live above the breadline. My employment is non-flexi time and if this proposal were to go ahead I fear that not only would my role model status be in jeopardy but other children's role models would fade into the background.

It was also highlighted at the PCM on Friday 13/09/2013 by Mark McDonald MSP that changes had been made to Bramble Brae's Condition and Suitability Evaluations report. It was stated that Bramble Brae had up until recently achieved a Level B, however, in order to give this proposal strength this level was dropped to a Level C prior to the Public Consultation Document going to print. I feel that ACC has given birth to faults with the Bramble Brae building structure and has manifested problems within the building itself in order for the preposterous amalgamation idea to sound pleasing!

I myself will never be pleased with regards this proposal as I feel Bramble Brae has been targeted in order to fulfil part of an empty school, situation over 1 ½ miles away, and to support financial downfalls within ACC.

Children are our future and without good quality, local schooling; what future are our children guaranteed?

I very much look forward to another PCM tonight at Northfield Academy in order to gain update on this ongoing battle between ACC and our local school, local community, local people and local children.

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3/10/013

Hi I'm a mum of quarryhill primary school. I am annoyed about the decision as we have been kept in the dark about a lot of it I only found out that quarryhill was to close aswell yesterday. Quarryhill is a great school but the pupils are struggling as it is without another school joining. My son is in primary 2 had parents night and teacher said he was struggling with something's but there no support for him as there no learning support. Doesn't help that the class is of 30 p2 pupil so how can the one teacher help those who are struggling if you add on another bunch of pupils won't be fair on them that need the help lots of the children don't like change either other pupils coming up might set them back and feel uncomfortable.

As for bramble brae side it's quite. Distance to walk specially with nursery children in bad weather conditions. Main road is very busy in morning aswell so is also a danger. I don't see why u can't just keep bramble brae open as they have already closed the community centre so they won't have much left they have a great little community down that end. I seriously think you should not close bramble brae the reasons are obvious to everyone the main road is the worse not everyone will use a lollipop man.

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As I have been unable to attend any meetings regarding the merger of the two school, I would like to raise my points.

I have two children who have attended Quarryhill since nursery stage. My boy is now in P7 and daughter is now in P5.

My concerns for the schools coming together is overcrowding. My son already has a class of 31 pupils in P7 which is an important year before academy and I feel that that is a lot of pupils for one

class as it is. What will happen if they merge? Even bigger classes to deal with. My daughter only has a class of 22 which I am sure is much easier to teach the pupils and give them the best in class.

The only way this would work if you extended the school building at Quarryhill to give you extra classes to keep the class numbers down. I have not read anything about that happening

So I can only presume that you are going to squeeze all the Bramble Brae pupils into the school. This is not a good idea for the individual learning of the children.

The future of the children needs to be considered, I don't have a problem with schools coming together if there is room to put them there!!

Once again I just wish the council would leave things as they are.

4/10/2013

I write to raise my objections of the proposed merger between Bramble Brae and Quarryhill primary schools:

- The two schools are in regeneration areas of the city, therefore money should be spent in resources for these schools, instead of merging them together. The schools are also the heart of their respective local communities and this will have a negative effect on the areas if they were amalgamated.
- The children will be in overcrowded and cramped conditions, which will not be a good learning environment; it will also not be a good teaching environment either.
- Many of the children will have to cross Provost Fraser Drive, which is a busy road and would be dangerous for the children crossing.

I would encourage the council to put more money into education, not merge or close schools. Every child has a right to a good, high quality education; merging these schools will not do this and will have a detrimental effect on the children's education.

08/10/13

I decided to wait until after I attended the last public meeting (Wed 2nd October 7.30pm) before sending in my views regarding the proposal to bring two schools into one and after careful consideration I have collected my thoughts and detailed my main concerns below.

I worked for a bank for 16 years and was involved in the closure/merger of 4 different branches during that time, one of which was while I was Branch Manager so I was at the front end of all the complaints and worries from the community. I fully understand that these events take place 99% of the time to save a business money in the long run and Aberdeen City Council are no different from any other business trying to cut corners.

My son attends Quarryhill School and to date between P1 - P4 he has had one day off sick to which he still blames me as it was a false alarm and stopped him from receiving his 100% attendance award. Lucky for me he got it the next year so I was forgiven. He loves school and loves all his teachers and in the 4 years he has been there I have never heard him say he doesn't want to go to school. I would hate to see this view change when he realises there's going to be a lot of changes and the possibility of him being split up from his friends in class if the merger goes ahead.

Quarryhill School has its problem kids the same as any other school but it is well managed and any trouble is knocked on the head quickly. My son knows all the other pupils by face if not by name and loves family time with the different groups of kids and teachers. It is a brilliant way to bring the whole

school together and cuts out the them and us that can so often occur between the younger and older pupils.

I do not know Bramble Brae school personally but I have listened to some of their parents and they are passionate about saving their school as I'm sure I would be if it was the other way around so I have only listed my concerns mainly on a safety side.

Firstly I would like to stress my concern about the congestion in the corridors another 150 children will cause as it is already chock-a-block when the kids are battling past each other to get to their jackets and schoolbags, etc. at breaktimes and the end of day. Have we consider all our fire exit routes?

2nd, school dinner hall - at present there are 2 lunchtimes as the hall is not large enough to fit everyone in at once. When this was brought up at the public meeting the answer to overcome this problem was to start lunches even earlier and stagger them. Our school is in the process of changing the way the kids play with each other through 'Grounds For Learning' where the whole school mingle and this suggestion would make it very difficult for everyone to play together for any length of time.

3rd, Assembly - I was in school today waiting to attend a meeting and watched all the kids queuing up in an orderly fashion to get back to their classes which took quite a while as they go out in class order. I turned to the other parents and said 'picture another 150 kids lining up on top of what we see there and think about how long it will take to empty the hall each time' to which the another mum replied 'Complete chaos'.

4th, Provost Fraser Drive - it appears there isn't enough volume of traffic to merit proper crossings along the Drive and no mention of another Patrolling Officer at any stage so although I do not live at that end of town I do not even feel safe letting my 8 year old cross over Cairnwell Drive as it is a busy enough road so I certainly wouldn't feel happy at letting him cross Provost Fraser Drive as I've seen the speed the vehicles travel along there. We also have a high level of buses using that road both day and night. I have a lot of friends who have children at Mile End and I know they had a battle to have traffic lights installed but they ended up with 2 sets of lights within half a mile of each other and Midstocket Road has a lower level of traffic passing through than Provost Fraser Drive. Is it a case of the louder someone shouts the more they'll achieve???

5th, After-school clubs, it has taken a while to get some of our clubs up and running and already we have waiting lists for quite a few of the clubs so our kids are concerned as to how you think we can bring in more children and clubs when we don't have the time or space to accommodate everything we would like to do just now. We only have one hall and 5 afternoons/evenings a week.

Lastly, although I know the plans drawn up are only rough ideas at moment I am concerned that we will have to lose our General Purpose and play zones as these will be needed as classrooms to house the extra bodies. Where will our children then go for drama, choir, private music tuition, etc. as most of the parent in this are wouldn't be able to afford to do some of these activities outside of school?

I could go on forever as there are plenty of reasons why I feel this cannot work from the size of staffroom to lack of toilet space to class sizes but I'm pretty sure all this has been covered by many others during this exercise.

The one thing I would ask is that someone from Education dept. and Health & Safety arrange a day visit to Quarryhill School to see for themselves how little space there is in our corridors and dining halls and picture in their heads the impact of another 150 children adding to the already congested

areas. Perhaps they should arrange for Bramble Brae pupils to come along for a special assembly one week to show everyone the difference that extra 150 will make.

I know one voice cannot change something that's already setting in concrete but I hope our views are taken seriously when you have your final consultations.

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09/10/13

Our main concerns are detailed below.

1 – Large classes being taught in rooms that were not designed with Curriculum for Excellence in mind.

The school was built in the fifties – the way we are able to cope with large classes is by using “double classrooms” – two rooms linked with each other. If the number of pupils in the building were to become significantly larger then this would not be practical as each class would have an individual room. The result of this would be that large classes would be squeezed in a space which is too small to properly deliver the current curriculum.

Children would also be too close together resulting in loss of personal space and them becoming agitated. This is a recipe for disaster.

It is also worth noting that the school was built as a Primary 4-7 school. Kingswood - the original infant school had larger classrooms. When that school closed we used two double rooms for the youngest infant classes. The other infant classes don't have the areas they need within their own classes. Further infant classes will lose out educationally in the amalgamation.

2 – The hall at the moment is fully utilised – with only eight classes.

For the school to deliver the required two hours of meaningful PE we would need another hall – but we are told that this will not happen.

A larger number of pupils would also have an effect on the school dinner service as the hall is used to serve lunches and is already nearly at capacity.

3 – At the moment there are quiet areas to which PSAs can take children. This may not be possible if all rooms are utilised for teaching.

As we have a number of volatile children at all stages of the school it is sometimes necessary, for a short period of time, for a child to work with a PSA away from the class. This is very useful as it can often calm a difficult situation. The worry is that if this is not possible the situation in class would escalate, resulting in learning being disrupted for the rest of the class.

4 – We are concerned that there are not enough rooms to accommodate the increased number of classes.

We have been told that the projected roll shows that there could be 15 classes at the new school – this does not include the two nursery classes that we will need. At present we have an ASN Base and a Nurture room a library and two general purpose rooms which are used for drama, music and instrumental tuition. We cannot see how all this would fit in to the number of rooms that we have available – even if the double rooms are separated.

We are particularly concerned that the Nurture Room would not be available as this has benefited a number of children and parents in the school.

This obviously ties in with our first point that it would be extremely difficult to effectively deliver the Curriculum for Excellence in the space that would be available.

To sum up - the teaching staff at Quarryhill can see no sound educational reasons for an amalgamation with Bramble Brae as both schools play an important part in the local community. We are extremely concerned that the space available will not effectively support the continued educational needs of all the children concerned.

Sometimes big is not better!

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my daughter is in Primary 5 at the moment and she absolutely loves her time at Bramble Brae there is a real community feel at Bramble Brae school and this comes across in all the children and parents who come into contact with the school.

My main concern would be the safety of getting to Quarryhill as my daughter would need to walk there herself this would be more worrying in the winter months when its still dark going to school and dark when they come out as most parents we don't have a car and there is no bus route between our home and Quarryhill.

My other concern would be the disruption to my daughters school work right in the middle of her primary school education she has done so well in her school work from primary 1 that I worry this will cause undue stress to her and this will affect her abilities.

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Bramble Brae serves the Cummings Park Community and removing the school from the community and moving the kids over to Mastrick will have a damaging effect on the Cummings Park Community. It will also disadvantage the residents in Bramble Brae area as there is currently a breakfast club at Bramble Brae because it is in a regeneration area. Quarryhill however is not in a regeneration area so children will lose access to this very valuable resource, this potentially will have an impact on the employment of parents in the Bramble Brae area and the education of their children.

I am concerned that primary kids would need to cross Provost Fraser Drive. Although the road has some traffic calming measures, it is still a busy and dangerous road which is not ideal for kids of this age to cross.

The suitability rating for Bramble Brae is narrowly a C, however as this I understand relates mostly to public access to the school due to the location of the reception and the CCTV provision. It seems very plausible to improve this rating by investing in the school rather than just closing the school.

If a new build school was on offer it may make the proposal more attractive to local residents. If a new was on offer at the Quarryhill location I would still have the concerns above for the Cummings Park residents however an A rated school could be seen as worth it, but as this is not on offer there seems to be no gains for my constituents.

If closure goes ahead I would also like to see an exit plan for Bramble Brae site prior to it being agreed that closure would go ahead. Without this local residents could be left with a vacant empty site for a protracted time.

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10/10/13

I am writing this email as concern for the closure of Bramble Brae primary school.

I have lots of concerns with this as there are many issues that arise when/if this happens. There is the main reason for concern which is the crossing of Provost Fraser Drive which is a highly busy road and there has been many accident occurred on this road. There is also the fact that for most parents live quite far away from Quarryhill they will have to walk at least an extra twenty minutes with little children. Then there also is a chance of bullying rising if this merge is to happen as there is a chance that the Quarryhill pupils will not get on with the Bramble brae pupils.

So all in all i think this merge is absolutely shocking and should definitely not happen whatsoever. I am very shocked that the council would even suggest this!!

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I am really struggling to find a positive in the proposal to Amalgamate Bramble Brae and Quarryhill primary schools. I see no educational benefit to the pupils at all. Everything seems to point to financial benefits rather than meeting the needs of the children.

My main concern should the proposal go ahead is that pupils from Bramble Brae School will actually suffer educational losses rather than gain educational benefits. The school has a proven record of reaching excellent attainment levels even when the starting point was well below average. A primary reason for this is that being a smaller school in a regeneration area allows for extra PSA's and smaller classes allowing the staff time to support and nurture some of the more disadvantaged children. Take these same children into a big school where they become more anonymous can only be detrimental to their learning therefore reducing any educational gains not increasing them. It is also likely that due to the number of pupils needing extra support being absorbed in a bigger number the amount of support staff would be reduced therefore reducing the support for those children in need of extra help. It has also been proven that many children with extra support needs struggle in big schools but with the unique support that Bramble Brae provides these children succeed and make remarkable progress. So, how would moving these children back into big schools be considered as an educational gain?

I attended the meetings at Northfield Academy on the 18th September and 2nd October 2013 and have read through the consultation document. All this has done is to convince me that the consultation is a paper exercise and that the council has already made up their mind to close Bramble Brae. The consultation document is very good at highlighting all the positive points and very little of the negative points of Quarryhill and more of the negative points with very little of the positive points for Bramble Brae.

When a question was raised about facilities for disability access at the consultation meetings the reply received indicated that although neither of the two schools had appropriate access it had been decided that Quarryhill was better suited. Why? You can gain access to both floors at Bramble Brae by wheelchair and there are toilets on both floors – not the case at Quarryhill so I would not consider Quarryhill fit for purpose.

We were also advised that there will be room for 16 different classes at Quarryhill but with pupil numbers only 15 classes would be necessary. Pupil numbers for the classes were stated to be 25 for P1; 30 for P2 and P3; and 33 for P4 to P7. Quarryhill parents advised the group that larger classes currently have the partitions open between classes to give them a “double room” and find it difficult to believe that 30-33 children can be comfortably educated in the single rooms because they are very small. Where is the education benefit in this? Primary school children need space not be crammed in together.

The gym at Quarryhill doubles up as the dining room. There are already 2 sittings for meals and given that it will be too far for Bramble Brae pupils to travel home for lunch this will mean that school dinner numbers will probably double. How can this be considered feasible?

The Quarryhill parents also advised that one of the “spare rooms” indicated on the drawing provided at the meeting on 2nd October actually stores the dining room tables. This room, therefore cannot be seconded for another purpose.

The proposed amalgamation will have the knock-on effect of reducing enrolment over the next year. Many parents will not want to enrol their children if they will be uprooted soon afterwards. There is also an element of parents trying to get their children into schools closer to home e.g. Manor Park or Heatheryburn while they have capacity to take in extra pupils. Although both these schools were predicted to cope with pupil numbers when built they seem to be struggling cope now – Manor Park in particular is using the community room as a classroom! Predictions don't seem to be the forte of Aberdeen City Council – in a previous attempt to close Bramble Brae it was predicted that the school would only have 56 pupils by 2006 which was drastically wrong. Admissions actually increased.

The Quarryhill parents also raised the issue of problems with nursery placement admission in the Quarryhill catchment. Parents failed to get placements for their children at Quarryhill and were advised the nursery was full. If Quarryhill don't have capacity for the nursery children now how will they be able to cope with all the nursery pupils from Bramble Brae? This raises the question from both schools on how this will affect the nursery age children – will they have to compete for places? Most of these children need the stimulation of attending nursery.

Although big schools can work for many children I feel that it's pretty evident that there is still a place for small schools to continue in specific areas providing a high level of support for disadvantaged children who respond better in a nurtured environment. I work alongside young adults with special needs and support and nurturing are key elements to successful progress, especially so with young children who have the chance to turn their lives around at an early stage. Bramble Brae provides this type of care and has proven that they can turn around the lives of many disadvantaged children. Again pointing to the only benefits being of financial gain!

At both the meetings I attended the parents, grandparents and friends of the pupils of both schools put forward many good arguments against the proposed amalgamation with sound principles which have hopefully been noted accordingly but as previously mentioned I doubt very much if they will be given the consideration they deserve.

I do not believe that this proposed merger between Bramble Brae and Quarryhill primary schools is in the best interest of the pupils and certainly DO NOT bring any significant educational benefits for the children. The NEEDS of the children in a disadvantaged area, a regeneration area are being met in full by Bramble Brae School and these children will lose many of these benefits by moving to Quarryhill. Aberdeen City Council has a duty to put the needs of these children first and before the financial benefits to the council.

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I am writing in opposition to the merger of Bramble Brae and Quarryhill.

I cannot understand how you can think this would be beneficial to our children and their education as well as our community.

My son is going to lose out on more than he will gain through this merger. He will not be able to take part in after school clubs due to the distance between where we live and the new school his day is going to be long enough without after school activities on top.

The cost to our family is going to be crippling as will be travelling on public transport at peak times when fares are dearer.

His education is going to suffer as he is a quiet shy boy who will be lost in a huge class and could be overlooked by staff who have a class of 30 to monitor.

He is not good at adapting to change and i'm concerned about how he will be helped to settle into a new environment with so many children all feeling the same way.

I understand that the council need to make savings and this is one way of doing so but surely whoever looked at the school estate has not taken any of the implications this merger will have seriously surely if they had they would have realised that this is never going to work.

Both schools are in completely different areas and are two completely different communities.

Had this been looked at in depth and completely they would have realised this.

There is another primary school within same area and 10mins walk from Quarryhill with a depleting school roll. Surely this would have been the more viable and sensible option.

I hope by time this decision is finalised that you will have come to your senses and seen how ridiculous this merger is and it will be scrapped.

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To Whom it May Concern

I would like to voice my concerns regarding the closure of Bramble Brae school and plans to merge with Quarryhill. Not only will this cause an increase in pupil roll, but there is also the concern of safety. Many children will have to cross the busy and dangerous Provost Fraser Drive. I hope you take these concerns on board.

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11/10/13

I am writing in opposition to the proposed merger of Bramble Brae and Quarryhill.

I have a son who attends Bramble Brae

Should this merger go ahead we will be losing the heart of our community.

The school is the focal point for families and is the centre in which we all meet and look out for one another. This will be lost at Quarryhill.

Our school has an open door policy and both teachers and management are happy to see/speak to you without an appointment if available. Will this be assured at Quarryhill.

The sense of safety we have for our children will be lost as our community cannot look out for them if they are over the other side of our area and we do not feel this will happen should they have to attend Quarryhill as they will be unknown to madtrick community.

Our school encourages and promotes individuality and engage wirth the kids to build self confidence and leadership no matter what stage they are in.

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## SchoolEstate

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**From:** Jackie Dunbar  
**Sent:** 09 October 2013 15:24  
**To:** SchoolEstate  
**Subject:** Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Consultation

Dear Derek

I wish to formally submit my views on the public consultation to Close Bramble Brae. As a local member for Northfield / Mastrick North I feel it is important that I submit my views as I cannot support closure of Bramble Brae and as I am not on the Education Culture and Sport Committee and I am unlikely to be able to vote against closure.

Bramble Brae serves the Cummings Park Community and removing the school from the community and moving the kids over to Mastrick will have a damaging effect on the Cummings Park Community. It will also disadvantage the residents in Bramble Brae area as there is currently a breakfast club at Bramble Brae because it is in a regeneration area. Quarryhill however is not in a regeneration area so children will lose access to this very valuable resource, this potentially will have an impact on the employment of parents in the Bramble Brae area and the education of their children.

I am concerned that primary kids would need to cross Provost Fraser Drive. Although the road has some traffic calming measures, it is still a busy and dangerous road which is not ideal for kids of this age to cross.

The suitability rating for Bramble Brae is narrowly a C, however as this I understand relates mostly to public access to the school due to the location of the reception and the CCTV provision. It seems very plausible to improve this rating by investing in the school rather than just closing the school.

If a new build school was on offer it may make the proposal more attractive to local residents. If a new school was on offer at the Quarryhill location I would still have the concerns above for the Cummings Park residents however an A rated school could be seen as worth it, but as this is not on offer there seems to be no gains for my constituents.

If closure goes ahead I would also like to see an exit plan for Bramble Brae site prior to it being agreed that closure would go ahead. Without this local residents could be left with a vacant empty site for a protracted time.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Dunbar  
Councillor for the Northfield/Mastrick North Ward  
Depute Leader of the SNP Group

## **SUBMISSION IN RELATION TO PROPOSALS FOR BRAMBLE BRAE/QUARRYHILL SCHOOLS**

In respect of the Council's proposals to close Bramble Brae and Quarryhill schools, and open a new amalgamated school within the existing Quarryhill building, I would offer the following submission. This submission is based on a range of views which have been submitted to me by concerned members of the community, and on my own views regarding the process that has been carried out.

At the outset I would say that I find it entirely unacceptable that a delay of six months existed between the committee's vote to go to consultation, and the consultation period starting in earnest.

This delay led to heightened uncertainty and anxiety within the affected communities, and I do not believe it was appropriate to make parents wait that length of time before seeing the arguments which the Council was deploying in support of its proposals.

### **THE NOTION OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

I note that the report which went before councillors at Education, Culture & Sport Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2013 noted that there was support suggested in submissions for Bramble Brae and Quarryhill to merge. This references the initial consultation which took place on the wider school estate review.

The Council's own consultation documents, however, show that only a handful of people attended the Northfield event in relation to the school estate, and it concerns me that the impression appears to have been given that there was support for the proposal when it appears to have been from a tiny number of individuals.

### **SUITABILITY RATING**

I also note that the February report listed Bramble Brae as being a 'B' classification for both condition and suitability. By the consultation process, however, this had changed to a B for condition but a C for suitability.

It has to be questioned as to how the school's suitability can have degraded in such a short space of time (we know from FOI requests by parents that the suitability assessments in February were undertaken in August/September 2012, making them around one year old at the time of the consultation process starting)

There is no indication of the costs of remedying these issues, but given the report mentions a cost of £1.25m in relation to upgrading the whole school to a 3Rs standard, the assumption must be that the costs of such works would not be prohibitive and would seem a more sensible solution than to simply close the school.

## **ROLL NUMBERS**

The report makes reference to the school roll at Bramble Brae as being low and likely to fall.

A cursory glance at the tables provided which show destinations of pupils, shows that a large number of pupils in the Bramble Brae zone are attending Manor Park and Westpark schools. Both of these schools are a short distance from Bramble Brae, and both have had significant investment, Manor Park as a 3Rs school and Westpark as part of works to the school. The suggestion could be made that a corresponding investment in Bramble Brae would perhaps encourage more pupils to remain within zone.

While there is much assertion that a lower roll would impact detrimentally on the education of the children at Bramble Brae, it is difficult to find a citation anywhere in the document which would back up such an assertion.

Clearly there are many schools across Scotland with rolls much lower than that of Bramble Brae which are capable of delivering the curriculum and producing strong educational outcomes for pupils, so the argument that a bigger school equals a better education is not an argument that carries much weight.

## **PUPIL SAFETY**

Parents and the wider community are rightly concerned about the safety of pupils travelling to school. The proposals being put forward by the Council would lead to children having to cross Provost Fraser Drive.

I undertook to walk from Granitehill Road, on the edge of the catchment zone, to Quarryhill School. It took me 35 minutes, and I was unencumbered by having a small child or group of children walking with me, stopping regularly and adding to the time taken.

Quite where the external consultants have plucked the figure of 20mins walking time between these two points is beyond me. It certainly bears no relation to my experience, nor that of any of the parents to whom I have spoken.

I would also question whether the route has been considered in the winter months, the route from Granitehill Road, and other areas of Cummings Park, to Quarryhill involves a very steep incline, and would be a difficult enough journey in normal conditions. Factor in snow and ice, and it becomes extremely dangerous.

While walking the route to Quarryhill, I stopped at the zebra crossing on Provost Fraser Drive. In light of the long-standing difficulties in recruitment of crossing patrollers it is likely that children may have to cross at the zebra crossing, assuming they do not try to cross further up the road.

While waiting to cross the road, a car ran through the zebra crossing without so much as attempting to stop. Had a child walked out into the road there would have almost certainly been an accident. The road itself is no stranger to pedestrian accidents, including fatalities.

To add around 150 young children crossing that road in the mornings and afternoons, particularly when it is dark in the winter months, can only add to the potential for accidents. Especially when one considers that the amount of traffic on the road has increased by nearly 20% since 2010.

While the point is undoubtedly true that it is parents' responsibility to get their children to school safely, the Council also has a responsibility not to make it more difficult for them to do so.

## **REGENERATION**

It is well documented that Cummings Park is a regeneration area, and as such it seems utterly ridiculous to close the school and, as many parents have described it, rip the heart out of the community.

There is also the question around the breakfast club. Currently Bramble Brae has a breakfast club, which has been helpful in allowing parents to access employment opportunities and ensuring that children start the day on a full stomach, which is shown to benefit their education as a result of improved concentration, behaviour etc.

If the breakfast club is to be discontinued that throws up questions for those parents whose employment hours have been worked around the Bramble Brae schedule. If it is to be continued at the proposed new school then there are further questions regarding the time of day children will be expected to rise in the morning in order to get to school.

The fact that Cummings Park is a regeneration community, and thus one which has a large number of low-income households, means that bus travel to school, as suggested in the document, is a virtual non-starter. One submission states that the costs to families could be in the region of £40 per week, maybe more in some cases, this is only going to add further unnecessary pressures to the cost of living in one of Aberdeen's regeneration communities.

I would question the wisdom in removing a community focal point from one of our regeneration areas. In other regeneration areas, amalgamations have taken place in the past, but all of these regeneration areas have schools within them. If the Council votes to shut Bramble Brae, Cummings Park will, uniquely, have no educational provision within a regeneration community. That, to me, is unacceptable.

## **EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT**

Central to any consideration over a school closure or amalgamation proposal is the concept of educational benefit. Any proposal needs to demonstrate educational benefit for the children affected.

It would be safe to say that the demonstration of educational benefit is virtually non-existent in these proposals. At no stage is there a demonstration of how Bramble Brae children will benefit educationally from this proposal.

Indeed the report highlights the strong educational performance of Bramble Brae currently. Highlighting that it has “among the best value added in the city” and also “greater value added throughout the year groups on average than the Scottish average”.

It further adds that “pupils at Bramble Brae school achieve and, in some cases, exceed expected milestones in their level of attainment.”

The school has received accolades for its attainment, including the Baillie John Porter Award and the report further highlights that the school received a Primary Science Quality Mark (Silver) and a “Commitment to Excellence” award for Health and Wellbeing.

These achievements to me would mark out a school that ought to be celebrated, not shut.

The most regrettable element for me, is that the educational benefit statement is at best generic, at worst a series of assertions with little evidential backing. The fact that the conclusions are lifted, virtually word for word, from a previous educational benefit statement on Torry & Kincorth academies is beyond comprehension.

Parents have waited six months for the document, the very least they could expect is that the document would make conclusions that were tailored to their school, rather than generic assertions lifted wholesale from a different document.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, educational benefit has not been proven at all. The school is a vital part of a regeneration community. The route to school in the event of an amalgamation is arduous and potentially unsafe. The sensible approach would be to abandon these proposals, and instead invest in the Bramble Brae building. I hope that the recommendation to committee will be along those lines.