

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone the area of housing known as the Macaulay Estate, from Hazlehead School to Airyhall School, and to adjust the Airyhall and Hazlehead school zone boundaries to accommodate the Pinewood/Hazledene housing development, with effect from 1 August 2016.

1. Introduction

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 rezone the area of housing known as the Macaulay Estate, from Hazlehead School to Airyhall School, and to adjust the Airyhall and Hazlehead school zone boundaries to accommodate the Pinewood/Hazledene housing development, with effect from 1 August 2016. 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.

1.1 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of Airyhall and Hazlehead 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.

1.2 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 Airyhall 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 consultation process ran from 13 January 2016 to 29 February 2016. During this period the council held a public meeting in Airyhall School. Statutory consultees 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 various 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 11 submissions to the consultation. A majority of these submissions were in favour of the proposal. Fifteen email submissions, all opposing the proposal, were received. These submissions suggested an alternative splitting of the Pinewood/Hazledene development between the catchment zones of Airyhall and Hazlehead Schools.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal offers appropriate educational benefits for the children attending both Airyhall and Hazlehead Schools. As a result of the proposal, both primary schools are likely to have sustainable and viable school rolls which will allow for delivery of a broad curriculum in line with the entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence. This proposal has the potential to avoid difficulties of overcrowding and should provide children at both schools with a variety of opportunities to learn and play with their peers.

3.2 Almost all the stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors supported the proposal and agreed that it served the interests of both schools well. Arrangements made by the council to allow existing pupils and their younger siblings to continue to attend Airyhall and Hazlehead Schools following the implementation of this proposal are reasonable. Most stakeholders also felt that the proposal was timely, providing greater clarity about schools' catchment zones for those about to move to the Pinewood/Hazledene development.

3.3 Stakeholders of Airyhall School agreed that it made sense to include the Macaulay estate within their zone. The proposal has the potential to address these parents' concerns about increases to the school roll leading to overcrowding. Stakeholders of Hazlehead School also felt it was sensible to include the Macaulay estate in the Airyhall School zone. They also welcomed the modest increase in school roll which would result from the proposal.

3.4 While almost all stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors were in agreement with the proposal, several expressed concerns about the distance which some parents and children living in the Pinewood/Hazledene housing development might have to walk to Hazlehead School. In taking forward its proposal, the council should provide details about safe walking routes to school for those living in the new development.

4. Summary

Aberdeen City Council's proposal to address primary school capacity and accommodation issues in Airyhall and Hazlehead schools has clear educational benefits. As a result of this proposal, children at both schools should be able to enjoy a wide range of learning and play activities with a variety of peer groups in a sustainable environment, free from overcrowding. In taking this proposal forward, the council should engage with stakeholders to identify safe walking and transport routes for those living in the Pinewood/Hazledene development. It should also ensure that appropriate transition arrangements are planned and implemented in good time for those children moving to a new school in August 2016.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
March 2016**