

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone an area currently within the Brimmond School zone to a new zone being created to serve primary education in a new development to the north and east of the River Don.

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 rezone a part of Brimmond School's catchment area which lies to the north and east of the River Don to a new zone being created to serve primary education in the Grandhome development, with effect from August 2015. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

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

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

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and

- visits to the site of Brimmond School and Danestone 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*. The council proposes to rezone part of the catchment area of Brimmond School. This area, lying to the north and east of the River Don, would become part of a new zone which is being created to serve primary education following the planned, significant housing development in the Grandhome Estate. Until such time as a new school is built in this area, children of nursery or primary school age living in the area would attend Danestone School.

2.2 The formal consultation on the proposal under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* ran from 25 August to 10 October 2014. Parents of children attending Brimmond School were informed about the proposal by letter with further information available on the council's website. There were no attendees at a public meeting held on 1 October 2014. One written submission was received by the council.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 There are currently no children attending Brimmond School from the area which would be rezoned should the proposal go ahead. Information provided by the council about the planned housing development in the Grandhome Estate indicates that new houses would not be constructed before 2021. Consequently, children who currently attend Brimmond School would not be affected by this proposal.

3.2 From 2021, a projection of an additional 700 houses within the Grandhome Estate development would lead to an estimated rise of around 245 children attending Brimmond School. The proposal will assist the council in managing the school roll at Brimmond School over coming years, reducing any problems related to over capacity. Children who will live in the Grandhome Estate development will benefit from attending a local school, with their peers, without the need for travelling significantly further to Brimmond School and the consequent potential reduction in opportunities for them to attend out-of-hours activities.

3.3 Parents and staff at Brimmond School, who met with HM Inspectors, support the proposal, believing that it will help to address projected increases in the school roll.

3.4 The council's proposal will further encourage Brimmond School, which was itself recently formed through the amalgamation of two nearby schools, to develop strong links within a geographically closer and more distinct surrounding community.

3.5 Should the proposal go ahead, the council recommends that children, of nursery and primary ages, living in the Grandhome Estate development would initially attend Danestone School until there are sufficient numbers to warrant a new

school. Parents of children at Danestone School, who met with HM Inspectors, were positive about the proposal. The council needs to clarify further its plans regarding any changes to zoning arrangements for Danestone School. In doing so, it should outline its plans to ensure that children travelling to Danestone from the Grandhome Estate development can do so safely.

3.6 Children at both Brimmond School and Danestone School are unlikely to be directly affected by this proposal. Nevertheless, children at both schools expressed broad support. Those at Danestone School felt that more children in the future would help to enhance children's learning activities.

4. Summary

The proposal to rezone a part of Brimmond School's catchment area which lies to the north and east of the River Don to a new zone being created to serve primary education in the proposed Grandhome Estate development, with effect from August 2015, has the potential to bring educational benefits to the children who will attend Brimmond School and to those children who will live in the Grandhome Estate development. Almost all of those who responded to the consultation or met with HM Inspectors supported the proposal.

In its final consultation report the council needs to clarify further its recommendation that children living in the Grandhome Estate development would initially attend Danestone School. In doing this, it should consider any planned changes to zoning arrangements at Danestone School.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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