

Consultation proposal by Aberdeen City Council

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to re-zone the Hanover Street Primary School catchment area from St Machar Academy to Harlaw Academy.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aberdeen City Council proposes to re-zone the Hanover Street Primary School catchment area from St Machar Academy to Harlaw Academy.

1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the public meeting held on Tuesday 20 May 2014 in connection with the council's proposal;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, a written submission from parents; and
- visits to the site of Hanover Street Primary School, St Machar Academy and Harlaw Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal, and the benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* between Tuesday 6 May and Wednesday 18 June 2014. It held a public meeting on Tuesday 20 May 2014. The council received one response to the proposal. This response supported the proposal.

2.2 HM Inspectors met with representative groups of parents, children, young people and staff across the three schools, including all children in P5 and P6 at Hanover Street Primary School. All consultees who responded to the proposal and who met with HM Inspectors supported the proposal. They felt it was a sensible option. They felt that Harlaw Academy was closer to where most children who attend Hanover Street Primary School live. They also felt that Harlaw Academy was also easier for children to walk to and was on a direct bus route.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The proposal to re-zone the Hanover Street Primary School catchment area from St Machar Academy to Harlaw Academy to take effect from August 2015 is reasonable and of clear merit. There are currently 97 young people of secondary age who are resident in the Hanover Street Primary School catchment area. Of these young people, 30 attend St Machar Academy. Twenty-seven of them attend Harlaw Academy as the result of parental placing requests. The remaining children attend other secondary schools within the city boundary. If the proposal is implemented, most children who live in the catchment area of Hanover Street Primary School will have a reduced journey time to school. Parents, children, young people and staff also feel that the walking route to school will be safer than the current walking route to St Machar Academy. Children will also have access to direct bus routes to school that are not available for the journey to St Machar Academy.

3.2 The current roll of Harlaw Academy is just over 900. Almost half of those who attend the school do so as the result of placing requests from parents for places for young people who do not live within the school's catchment area. Staff at Harlaw Academy believe implementation of the proposal will increase the proportion of young people on the roll from the school's extended catchment area.

3.3 Harlaw Academy is currently associated with three primary schools. These schools form an Associated Schools Group (ASG). The ASG plans transition events such as music and science mornings and health and wellbeing events for children in the associated primary schools. If the proposal is implemented, Hanover Street Primary School will become part of the Harlaw Academy ASG. As a result, the

children who will transfer to Harlaw Academy at the end of P7 will benefit from participation in these transition activities. Creating formal links between Harlaw Academy and Hanover Street Primary School also has the potential to enhance the planning of transitional arrangements for children who require additional support with their learning.

3.4 If the proposal is implemented, the catchment area of Harlaw Academy will be extended to include the Aberdeen harbour area. This area includes a number of commercial and energy based companies and industries. This has the potential to improve the curriculum and enhance the opportunities available for young people by extending the breadth and range of the school's partnership working with these businesses.

3.5 Aberdeen City Council has undertaken strategic reviews of secondary and primary education. These reviews were approved by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in 2010 and 2013 respectively. The proposal to re-zone Hanover Street Primary School catchment area to Harlaw Academy is part of the longer term strategy to manage the school rolls, not only in St Machar Academy and Harlaw Academy, but more widely in other schools across the city. This strategy will help the council meet its duty to secure best value along with its statutory obligations under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to secure efficient provision of school education and to provide sufficient school accommodation.

4. Summary

The proposal to re-zone the Hanover Street Primary School catchment area from St Machar Academy to Harlaw Academy has a number of benefits. It is seen as a common sense solution by consultees and has their full support. The inclusion of Hanover Street Primary School within the Harlaw Academy ASG will enable children to benefit from the transition activities undertaken by the ASG. The extension of the catchment area of Harlaw Academy to include the Aberdeen harbour area has the potential to improve the curriculum and enhance opportunities for young people by extending the school's range of business partnerships in the commercial and energy sectors. The proposal is also part of a strategic and coordinated approach to the management of the school estate across the city of Aberdeen. This approach has the potential to help Aberdeen City Council meet its duty to secure best value in the delivery of its services.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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