

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone an area of housing within the Manor Park and Bramble Brae Schools zones, from the St Machar Academy zone to the Northfield Academy zone.

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 an area of housing within the Manor Park and Bramble Brae Schools zones, from the St Machar Academy zone to the Northfield Academy zone. 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:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 19 May 2016 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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 Bramble Brae School, Manor Park School, Northfield Academy and St Machar Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) 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 9 May 2016 until 20 June 2016. During this period the council held a public meeting in Manor Park School on 19 May 2016. No consultees or members of the public attended the meeting. The relevant schools made parents and pupils aware of the consultation. The consultation documentation was published on the Aberdeen City Council website and made available in a number of locations across the city. Alternative formats and languages were available on request. The council received no responses to the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal has clear educational benefits. It will ensure that all children who attend Bramble Brae School or Manor Park School are able to attend the same secondary school. This will improve children's social support and provide better continuity in learning as they move into secondary school. The proposal will improve the long-term viability of both secondary schools, providing opportunities to plan better for transitions from primary school into secondary school. In Northfield Academy, the increasing numbers will provide improved opportunities for peer support. The short-term decrease in the roll of St Machar Academy will help to maintain pupil numbers below its maximum capacity and support the delivery of the curriculum in more suitable spaces.

3.2 All pupils, parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors were very positive about the proposal. They saw the benefits of changing the school zones and supported strongly what they saw as sensible and appropriate proposals. In particular, staff in Manor Park School thought the proposal would help to improve the planning for children's learning as they moved to secondary school. All parents agreed that the proposal would improve safety for young people walking to secondary school. Senior staff in Northfield Academy had a slight concern that the council's music service, currently housed in vacant classrooms in the school, might have an impact on the school as the roll increases.

4. Summary

Aberdeen City Council's proposal to rezone an area of housing within the Manor Park and Bramble Brae Schools zones, from the St Machar Academy zone to the Northfield Academy zone has strong educational benefits. There is potential for children to have smoother progression in learning and to be taught in schools which

have appropriate rolls for the size of the buildings. Senior staff in Northfield have a small but reasonable concern about the impact of the presence of the council's music service in the school as the roll increases. The council needs to set out how it will work with the school to ensure this does not impact negatively on learning and teaching.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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