

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to rezone ground within the Middleton Park School zone which lies to the west and north of the current limit of the built up area of Middleton Park to a new zone to be created to serve primary education provision in the Grandhome development, with effect from August 2015.

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 ground within the Middleton Park School zone which lies to the west and north of the current limit of the built up area of Middleton Park to a new zone to be created to serve primary education provision 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and

- visits to the site of Middleton Park 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 consultation ran from 25 August to 10 October 2014.

2.2 The council advertised the formal consultation process in local newspapers and parents of children attending Middleton Park School were informed by letter. A dedicated area of the council's website was populated with data relating to the proposal. The council held a public meeting on 24 September 2014. This was attended by 12 members of the public. The council received six written responses regarding the proposal.

2.3 During the consultation period, stakeholders raised concerns about the council's roll projections for Middleton Park School contained within the proposal. In response to these concerns, the council issued a revised version of the proposal with amended roll projections forecasts on 6 October 2014.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Aberdeen City Council's proposal to amend the Middleton Park School zone will eliminate the anticipated long-term over capacity issues within the school which will arise from the planned housing development in the Grandhome Estate development in the years leading up to 2020.

3.2 The proposal should, in due course, help ensure that pupils living in the new Grandhome Estate development will attend primary school with their peers from their new community. It will allow children attending Middleton Park Primary School to continue to benefit from the positive ethos which they and their parents believe the school provides.

3.3 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 School from the Grandhome Estate development can do so safely.

3.4 Children currently attending both Middleton Park 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 has the potential to bring a number of educational benefits to children who will attend Middleton Park School and to those who will live in the planned Grandhome Estate development. The proposal will also assist the council to make effective and efficient use of its resources by maintaining the roll of Middleton Park School at a manageable and sustainable level between 2014 and 2020. In its final consultation report, the council needs to clarify with members of the Middleton Park School community its reasons for not pursuing the option of retaining the current Middleton Park School zone. The council needs to consider any implications for zoning arrangements at Danestone School.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
October 2014**