

Report by Education Scotland addressing the educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to remove the dual zoning between Sunnybank School and Hanover Street School, and to include the area of land affected within the zone for Sunnybank School only with effect from August 2016.

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 remove the dual zoning between Sunnybank School and Hanover Street School, and to include the area of land affected within the zone for Sunnybank School only with effect from 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of both Sunnybank School and Hanover Street 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, including younger siblings;
- 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 sites of Hanover Street School and Sunnybank School.

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 to 29 February 2016. A copy of the statutory consultation document was made available at several venues, including both schools, and letters with information on the proposal were made available to parents of children at the schools involved. Aberdeen City Council's website also provided information on the proposal, including the consultation document. During the consultation period, the council held a public meeting on 3 February 2016. One parent attended from Sunnybank School. The council received no written responses to the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal is of clear educational benefit to children attending both schools. If implemented, the proposal will help sustain viable pupil rolls in both schools and will help the council to ensure best value in managing its school estate. The proposal addresses the predicted increase in roll at Hanover Street School, which is likely to exceed the building's capacity over the next seven years. As a result of the proposal, both primary schools have the potential to provide children with a broad range of learning experiences, in line with Curriculum for Excellence, in an environment free from overcrowding. Arrangements made by the council to allow existing pupils and their younger siblings to continue to attend Hanover Street School are reasonable. A high proportion of children in the currently dual zoned area attend Sunnybank School. The council should ensure that appropriate transition arrangements are in place for children and those children moving to a new school in August 2016.

3.2 Overall, in both primary schools, staff, children and parents who met with HM Inspectors were positive and saw the benefits of the proposal. Stakeholders were pleased that the younger siblings of existing Hanover Street pupils would be able to attend the same school as their older brother or sister. In Sunnybank School, a few stakeholders wanted the council to ensure that sufficient space was available for pupils as a result of the increased school roll and to consider the possible relocation of other services currently housed within the building should the need for more accommodation become apparent in the future. A few stakeholders felt there are advantages for keeping these services in the school. Children in Sunnybank School felt that the proposal would allow them to have more friends and better access to school clubs due to potentially increased numbers. A few stakeholders from Sunnybank considered that the proposal to re-zone would make children's travel to school safer as a result of them not having to cross a dual carriageway.

4. Summary

The proposal to remove the dual zoning between Sunnybank School and Hanover Street School, and to include the area of land affected within the zone for Sunnybank School only is of clear educational benefit. If the proposal is implemented, it will enable children who live in the catchment zone to attend their local primary school and has the potential to address the projected increased school roll at Hanover Street School thus avoiding overcrowding. It will also enable the council to ensure best value in managing its school estate. If implemented, and on account of the tight timescale, the council urgently needs to ensure that appropriate transition arrangements are in place for children who will attend a new school in August 2016.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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