

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to establish a new non-denominational primary school and implement catchment changes to address school capacity and accommodation pressures in South East Edinburgh.**

**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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to establish a new non-denominational primary school and implement catchment changes to address school capacity and accommodation pressures in South East Edinburgh. 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 impact of the proposal for children and young people of the effected primary and secondary schools; 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 9 February 2017 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 the new school, as well as to other named schools in the consultation including, Gracemount, Gilmerton and Liberton Primary Schools, and Gracemount and Liberton High Schools. Discussions were also held with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 The City of Edinburgh 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 16 January to 3 March 2017. During this period the council held public meetings at Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools which were attended by 35 and 17 stakeholders respectively, including members of the public and statutory consultees. Consultation documentation was published on The City of Edinburgh Council website and copies were available for public consultation at several venues during the consultation period, including the schools concerned. A proforma questionnaire and an email address were made available for responses. The council received 20 responses overall, with 13 responses in support of the proposal. Nearly all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors felt that the council had provided good opportunities for being consulted and for giving their views. The council put in place helpful child-friendly procedures to engage children from Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools directly in the consultation process.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The proposal involves:

- the establishment of a new non-denominational primary school and nursery within the 'Broomhills' housing development site, incorporating parts of the existing catchment areas for Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools within the catchment for the new school;
- the realignment of catchment boundaries so that The Murrays estate and parts of Gilmerton Dykes and Lasswade Road are within the catchment area of Gracemount Primary School rather than that of Gilmerton Primary School;
- the realignment of catchment boundaries so that the northern part of the Alnwickhill Water Treatment Works development site is within the catchment area of Gracemount Primary School rather than that of Liberton Primary School;
- the alignment of the new non-denominational primary school to Gracemount High School;

- a reduction in the catchment area of Liberton High School (which includes the current dual catchment area) so that it no longer covers Burdiehouse, The Murrays or the parts of Gilmerton Dykes and Lasswade Road which will be within the catchment area of Gracemount Primary School;
- a reduction in the catchment area of Gracemount High School (which includes the current dual catchment area) so that it no longer covers the area on the west side of Lasswade Road which will remain within the Gilmerton Primary School catchment area; and
- the realignment of the catchment boundary so that the northern part of the Alnwickhill Water Treatment Works development site is within the catchment area of Gracemount High School rather than that of Liberton High School.

3.2 The proposal, in principle, offers clear educational benefits to children in each of the three schools. The planned new 'Broomhills' primary school will accommodate the projected school roll arising from the above proposal. When completed, it will provide children with a purpose-built learning environment well-suited to their learning needs and accessible to all. The new learning environment has been designed to promote health and wellbeing and encourage outdoor learning. At the same time, the proposal will reduce the potential overcrowding at both Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools as a result of the new housing development. The proposed changes to the catchment areas of Gracemount and Liberton High Schools will mean that there will no longer be a requirement to operate a dual secondary school catchment allowing more contextualised curriculum and pastoral support planning at transition. The associated nursery provision planned as part of the new school will support The City of Edinburgh Council to better deliver the Scottish Government's commitment to increasing the early years and childcare entitlement to 1140 hours per year by 2020.

3.3 All parents, pupils and staff who met with HM Inspectors in local community primary and secondary establishments support the building of a new school. There is a clear understanding that the rolls of both Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools would outstrip capacity as a result of the significant housing developments in the area. However, given that the new housing development is at the early stages, there were a number of areas relating to the practicalities of the proposal that were unclear at this time. This includes the transition arrangements to allow Gilmerton and Gracemount Primary Schools to accommodate additional pupils from the initial phases of new housing development.

3.4 In taking forward its proposal, the council should continue to work closely with stakeholders and the headteachers of schools involved in the proposal. The council should ensure that effective and well communicated interim transition measures relating to class arrangements and use of existing classroom space are put in place. It will be particularly important to ensure that the first groups of children from the new 'Broomhills' catchment are well supported to attend established local schools while their school is being built, while ensuring there is no detriment to current pupils attending these schools. Parents, children and staff also wished to continue to be consulted about staffing, safe routes to school, and access to popular and well attended after-school and school holiday programmes. These issues should be

clearly addressed. The council should ensure that all transition arrangements are well planned and clearly communicated to all stakeholders to meet the needs of all children who attend Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools and the new 'Broomhills' catchment school. Going forward, future pressures in the secondary sector will need to be considered and associated feasibility work may be required to determine an appropriate way of delivering additional capacity.

#### **4. Summary**

The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to establish a new primary and nursery school to meet growing local need in South East Edinburgh, adjusting appropriately established local school catchment areas, has clear educational benefits. The proposal has the potential to provide children who will reside in the newly formed catchment areas with modern, purpose-built accommodation designed to meet the needs of its learners. Once the new school is built, it should reduce the possibility of overcrowding at both Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools. Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. In taking this proposal forward, the council should continue to engage with stakeholders over its planned transition arrangements for children who will attend the new school and those children who attend Gracemount and Gilmerton Primary Schools. A close watching brief is also required on the implications of the new housing developments in South East Edinburgh on associated secondary provision.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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