

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education, Culture and Sport</b>
DATE	<b>30 January 2014</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Statutory Consultation Report – Proposals to amalgamate Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools, to amalgamate Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and to vary the catchment area of Middleton Park School.</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/14/006</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To report to Committee on the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposals to

- (i) close Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools and to establish a new amalgamated school within the existing Quarryhill building and campus,
- (ii) close Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and establish an amalgamated school within the existing Glashieburn building and campus and
- (iii) vary the delineated (catchment) area of Middleton Park School and the adjacent Brimmond (formerly Bucksburn) School and Bucksburn Academy.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- (i) To discontinue proceeding with proposal (i) above
- (ii) To discontinue proceeding with proposal (ii) above and
- (iii) To discontinue proceeding with the proposal to vary the delineated (catchment) area of Middleton Park School and the adjacent Brimmond (formerly Bucksburn) School and Bucksburn Academy.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as a result of Recommendations (i) and (ii) other than any potential savings will not now be made. Any implications of Recommendation (iii) will be met within existing budgets.

### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Legal – There are no legal implications related to Recommendations (i) and (ii). Recommendation (iii) refers to potential rezoning and, as such, any decision to progress with that recommendation will be subject to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, 2010.

Resources – Officer time and expenditure within established budgets will meet all requirements under all recommendations.

Personnel – Implementation of the recommendations will not result in any significant personnel implications.

Property - Implementation of the recommendations will not result in any significant property implications.

Equipment – There are no equipment implications or risks associated with this report in itself.

Sustainability and environmental – Implementation of these proposals will have minimal impact upon sustainability and environmental issues related to the school estate.

Health and safety – There are no implications or risks related to this report in itself other than the requirement to carry out a School Travel Assessment Report for pupils travelling from new housing within the Grandhome development to Danestone School.

Policy – there are no implications or risks related to this report in itself.

## **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

### **5.1 School Reorganisation Proposals**

These proposals contribute to a widespread programme to manage the school estate across the city.

Statutory consultation on these proposals was carried out as result of an instruction from Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 11 February, 2013.

## 5.2 Educational Implications

The Education Authority has a programme to ensure the provision of an affordable and suitable education service for all its pupils. These recommendations will require re-evaluation but all pupils will continue to be suitably accommodated.

## 5.3 Statutory Consultation Feedback

Appendices 1 and 2 provide detailed feedback on the consultations. The follow sections provide a synopsis of the submissions and Education, Culture and Sport Directorate's responses to submissions and the reports from Education Scotland.

### **5.3.1 Bramble Brae/Quarryhill**

#### **(a) Methodology**

Appendix 1 provides a full report on consultation on the above proposal. All requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, 2010* were met or exceeded.

#### **(b) Feedback from Stakeholders**

There was overwhelming support to discontinue with the proposal. Parents/Carers, staff and many children felt that there would be no educational benefit in amalgamating the schools and creating a new school at Quarryhill.

Concerns included

- Timescales for implementation (August, 2014) being too short
- Inadequate spare space within the Quarryhill building
- Distinct nature of the two communities would be lost
- Pupils with Additional Support Needs would be unsettled by the change
- Additional travelling distances for children from parts of Bramble Brae zone would adversely affect (i) parents taking children and siblings to and from school, (ii) the ability for children to return home for lunch, (iii) the opportunity for children to attend after-school activities.
- More children crossing a main road twice daily would lead to an increased chance of road traffic accidents.

The council's response to these issues are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix 1).

#### **(c) Report of Education Scotland**

Education Scotland's report identified stakeholder concerns above and issues that the council would require to address in taking this proposal forward.

These were to:

- provide further information on the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the children directly affected by the proposal;
- give assurance to parents that any health and safety issues regarding the increased number of children in the new amalgamated school are identified and addressed;
- continue to consult with parents, children, and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal;
- clarify the proposed configuration of the present Quarryhill building and the availability and suitability of teaching spaces within the new amalgamated school.

The council's responses to these issues are also included in the Consultation Report.

#### **(d) Overall View of the Proposal**

None of the submissions supported the proposal.

### **5.3.2 Glashieburn/Middleton Park**

#### **(a) Methodology**

Appendix 2 provides a full report on consultation on the above proposal. All requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, 2010* were met or exceeded.

#### **(b) Feedback from Stakeholders**

There was overwhelming support to discontinue with the proposal. Parents/Carers, staff and many children felt that the consultation document had not provided sufficient detail of the educational benefit in amalgamating the schools and creating a new school at Glashieburn.

Concerns included

- timescales for implementation (August, 2014) being too short;
- inadequate space within the Glashieburn building and grounds;
- safe routes to school and parking/drop off;
- inaccuracies in the consultation document;
- provision for pupils with Additional Support Needs;
- provision for 2 hours Physical Education/Activity;
- adequacy of catering facilities.

The council's responses to these issues are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix 2).

#### **(c) Report of Education Scotland**

This report recognised the stakeholder concerns above and issues that the council would need to address in taking this proposal forward.

These were:

- to set out more clearly the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the children directly affected by it. In particular, the council needs to set out more specifically how the implementation of the proposal will improve the environment for learning and enable the council to meet children's learning needs more effectively;
- needs to clarify any proposed layout and structure for the amalgamated school, showing the teaching and learning spaces;
- continue to consult with parents, children and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal.
- duty to investigate and decide what, if any, action is required to correct these alleged omissions and inaccuracies;
- give more information about and set out clearly the educational benefits and timescales of the council's plan to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy.

The council's responses to the issues raised in the report are included in the Consultation Report (Appendix 2).

#### **(d) Overall View of the Proposal**

None of the submissions supported the proposal.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Committee accepts the proposals to

- (i) discontinue proceeding with proposal (i) above
- (ii) discontinue proceeding with proposal (ii) above and
- (iii) discontinue proceeding with the proposal to vary the delineated (catchment) area of Middleton Park School and the adjacent Brimmond (formerly Bucksburn) School and Bucksburn Academy.

## **6. IMPACT**

### **6.1 Corporate**

The implementation of the programme to manage the schools estate across the city articulates with the initiative, *Aberdeen the smarter City*. This identifies the main objectives of the Council.

1. We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem
2. Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.

3. Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.
4. We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

### **6.2 Equality and Human Rights implications**

A full equality and human rights impact assessment will be completed should any of the proposals progress to implementation.

### **6.3 Management of the School Estate**

There is an on-going requirement to continue to proactively manage the school estate. In this case, new zoning arrangements will be required within the Grandhome Estate development to create revised catchment areas for the new primary schools which will be built within the development. This will require the existing Middleton Park zone and that of Brimmond School (and their associated secondary schools) to be amended.

The council will bring forward new consultation proposals to create these new zones, prior to the delivery of the new first new school.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

The council has evidenced its commitment to proactively managing its school estate and fulfilled its obligations under statute. The council will continue to manage its school estate to provide a suitable and efficient provision for all its pupils.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1: Consultation Report on Proposal to Amalgamate Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools, including Education Scotland Report (Appendix 1 (a)).

Appendix 2: Consultation Report on Proposal to Amalgamate Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and to re-zone part of Middleton Park catchment area, including Education Scotland Report (Appendix 2(a)).

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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**Consultation Report on the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to close Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools and establish a new amalgamated school within the current Quarryhill building from August 2014.**

**1. Methodology**

All requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, 2010* were met or exceeded.

**2. Involvement of Stakeholders**

**(a) Public Events**

Four public consultation events were held to discuss the re-zoning proposal for Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools.

The numbers of attendees who signed in at the public meetings were:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Number of Recorded Attendees</i>
Friday 13 September	morning	Northfield Community Centre	22
Friday 13 September	afternoon	Northfield Community Centre	12
Wednesday 18 September	evening	Northfield Academy	39
Wednesday 2 October	evening	Northfield Academy	48

**(b) Further Engagement**

Officers from Education, Culture and Sport also met separately with staff of both schools, representatives of the schools' Parent Councils and with groups of children from both schools. A synopsis of pupil voice submissions was also made available to members of Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

**(c) Comments Received**

The following written submissions were received:

<i>Format</i>	<i>Number of submissions</i>
Email	32
Written	27 (including 3 group submissions)
Comment Cards	56

Paper copies of all submissions were made available in the Members Library and have been circulated to external members of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. Submissions, anonymised as necessary, were also made available on the council website.

#### **(d) Issues Raised**

The main issues raised were:

- distances to and from school for pupils and parents who live furthest from the Quarryhill site and the implication for pupils not returning home for lunch or undertaking after-school activities
- distinct nature of the two existing communities being lost;
- reduction in available spaces for some classes in amalgamated school;
- reduction in the capacity for some pupils to experience the nature of a small school where staff and pupils all know each other.

#### **(e) Education Scotland Report**

An essential element of the statutory consultation process is involvement of Education Scotland whose report is provided as Appendix 1(a).

The report identifies some positive aspects of the proposal in the following paragraphs.

Paragraph 3.4:

*'Implementation of this proposal will help the council address this issue and enable it to deliver its duty to secure best value through the provision of adequate and efficient provision of school education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980'.*

Paragraph 4.1:

*'if implemented it (the proposal) has the potential to broaden the staff expertise from both schools as it brings staff together and enable the greater sharing of current best practice. This will build upon the established links which already exist between the two schools'.*

Paragraph 4.2:

*'The proposal has the potential to contribute to the council's efforts to secure best value within the context of addressing over-capacity in the council's school estate. As a result, the council may be able to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of children and young people throughout the wider council area'.*

The report does not however support the view that the case has been made for the educational and pastoral advantages to pupils and potential improvements to attainment, achievement and educational aspiration that the proposed arrangements would provide.

In particular, the report identifies the requirement for the Council to address various elements within the proposal document as outlined in Section 3.



### 3. Addressing Issues Raised in Education Scotland Report

The following table indicates areas identified within the Education Scotland Report and the Council's responses.

Issue	Response/Proposed Action	Timescale
<p>4.1 Clearly and specifically describe how implementation of the proposal will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meet children's needs better</li> <li>• improve the curriculum</li> <li>• the quality of children's learning experiences and</li> <li>• improve the outcomes they achieve in the new amalgamated school</li> <li>• set out sufficiently clearly the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the children directly affected by it.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils at the amalgamated school are more likely to be placed in classes and groups which will promote work with peers of a more equivalent standard. A broader number of staff will bring a greater range of experience and expertise which will allow individual children's needs to be better met. Liaison between staff will assist in the development of a broader range of learning and teaching approaches.</p> <p>Curriculum for Excellence is not prescriptive in terms of learning activities. A larger staff will result in a broader range of approaches to learning and teaching being available. This will enable staff to evaluate different approaches to the curriculum and deliver learning activities in a more interesting and innovative ways. This will increase pupil motivation leading to improved performance.</p> <p>A broader range of staff experience will also provide a more diverse range of pupil activities and learning experiences being made available to pupils.</p> <p>A more diverse and innovative range of approaches to learning and teaching is likely to increase motivation and therefore outcomes are more likely to be successfully overtaken.</p> <p>Benefits for all pupils: more pupils at each year group/stage allowing more paired and group working with peers. Accelerated learning sets due to increased staffing. Greater flexibility to meet learners' needs. The expertise in providing enhanced value-added performance at Bramble Brae can be extended to all pupils in the new amalgamated school, providing better attainment performance.</p>	

<p>4.2 The council should outline any educational benefits to the wider education community of Aberdeen that will arise from achieving savings through the implementation of this proposal.</p>	<p>The proposal would support the council's obligations to secure best value for the whole school estate, within the context of addressing over-capacity and suitability. The council would be able to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of all children and young people in schools across the city.</p> <p>The council would be in a better position to plan a more efficient and effective school estate in terms of sufficiency and location of pupil spaces because resources could be more appropriately allocated to areas of demand.</p>	
<p>4.3 The council needs to give assurance to parents that any health and safety issues regarding the increased number of children in the new amalgamated school are identified and addressed.</p> <p>The council should consult further with parents of children currently at Bramble Brae to ensure their concerns about the walking conditions to the new school and implications of these are alleviated.</p>	<p>A full traffic impact assessment would be carried out if the proposal progresses. Any safety considerations identified would be addressed by Aberdeen City Council, as per current policy.</p> <p>Safe routes to school for all pupils would be identified and, where necessary, remedial works undertaken to minimise the risk of accident. Aberdeen City Council is committed to providing safe routes to school for all pupils.</p> <p>Further engagement with parents of children at Bramble Brae would be arranged in advance of implementation of the decision and routes would be agreed and planned with the community, including parents and children where appropriate.</p>	<p>February – March 2014.</p>
<p>4.4 The council has set a challenging timescale to take forward this proposal for amalgamation. In taking</p>	<p>The council has completed investigatory works and is now of the opinion that it would be preferable, if this proposal progresses, to implement the change at the beginning of session 2015-16, rather than 2014-15. This will provide more time to plan transition, finalise plans for</p>	<p>January to June 2014 for planning.</p>

<p>forward this proposal, the council needs to ensure that it provides sufficient time for further communication and consultation with parents, staff and children to alleviate their clear concerns and ensure effective transitions for all children affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Whatever course of action the council chooses to take, it needs to continue to consult with parents, children, and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal.</p>	<p>internal alterations and recruit a head teacher for the amalgamated school.</p> <p>Effective transition programmes will be worked up during session 2013-14 and the programme implemented in session 2014-15, so that all pupils, parents and staff are reassured that the transition will be as effective as possible.</p> <p>Additional officer time, met from existing budgets, can be made available to support this process.</p> <p>Comprehensive engagement with the two existing headteachers, staff, parent councils, pupil councils and the wider parent group will be facilitated.</p> <p>A working group to oversee the transition to the new school would be established and would meet regularly to ensure a smooth transition to the new amalgamated school.</p>	<p>August 2014 to June 2015 for implementation.</p>
<p>4.5 Aberdeen City Council needs to ensure that it addresses the concerns raised during the consultation period, including those set out in this report in its final consultation report. This includes the need to clarify the proposed configuration of the present Quarryhill building and the availability and suitability of teaching spaces within the new amalgamated school.</p>	<p>The proposed changes to the layout of the school would involve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) re-establishing the individual classrooms on the upper floor of the building. These classes are currently used in pairs, with a single class utilising two teaching areas (see Diagram 1(a));</li> <li>2) extending provision for nursery classes by re-configuring areas of the ground floor (see Diagram 1(b).</li> </ol> <p>Formal plans will be required to be developed for this element and appropriate planning applications made.</p> <p>Works to complete the internal reconfiguration can be carried out during the summer holidays 2014-15 at an estimated cost of £1 million.</p>	<p>February 2014 – August 2014.</p>

Diagram 1(a) Ground Floor Layout, Proposed Amalgamated School at Quarryhill

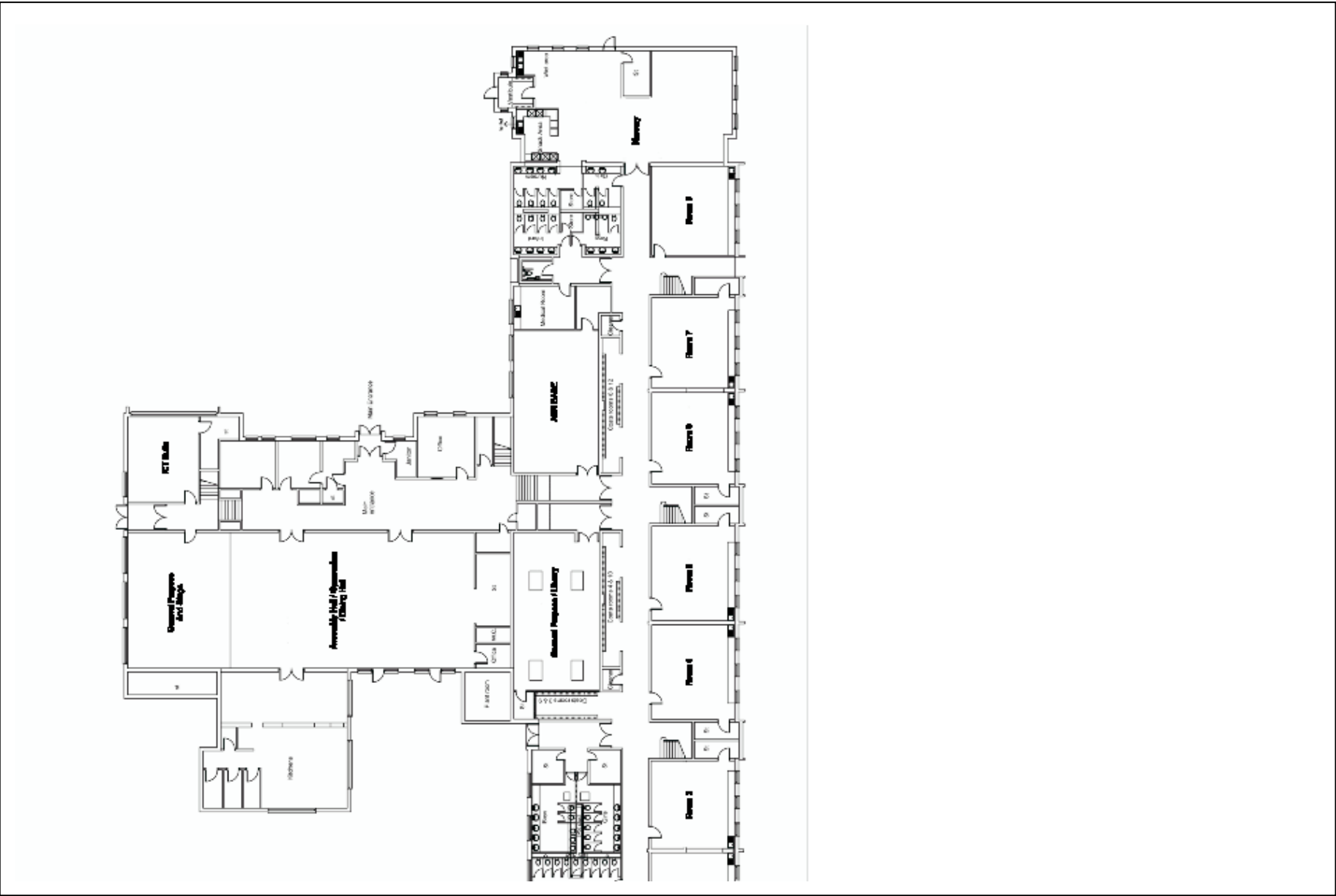
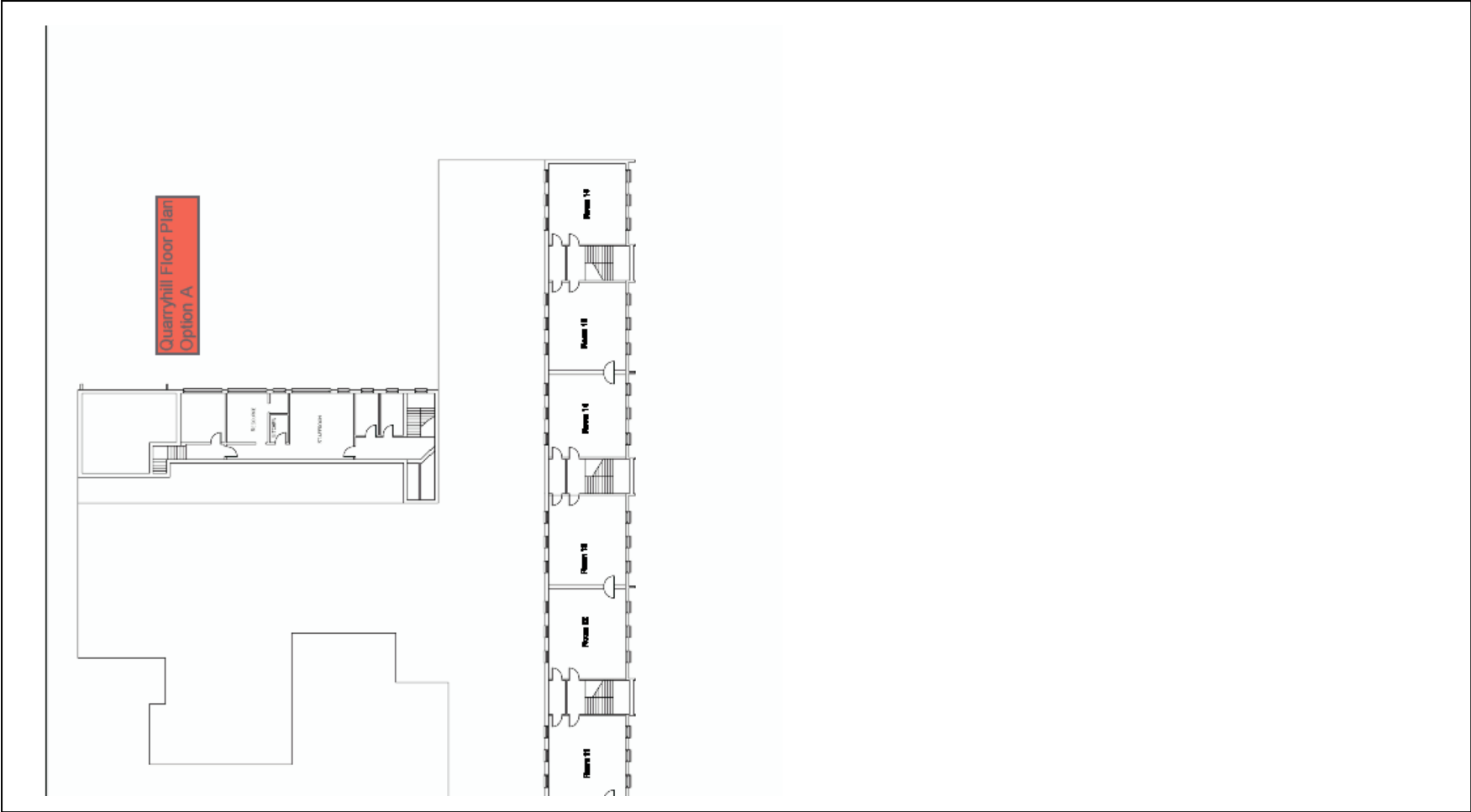


Diagram 1(b) First Floor Layout, Proposed Amalgamated School at Quarryhill



**Report by HM Inspectors, Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to close Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools and establish a new amalgamated school within the current Quarryhill building from August 2014.**

**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. As the council is proposing to close a school, it will need 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 the opportunity for representations to be made to Ministers.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The report from HM Inspectors 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 18 September 2013 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Bramble Brae Primary School and Quarryhill Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.3 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the 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

- 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*.

The consultation included four public meetings held in September and October 2013 and invitations to submit written responses or to complete a pro-forma.

The consultation period ran from 26 August to 11 October 2013. The council received a large number of responses to its proposal. None of the responses supported the proposal.

A member of staff from the council undertook a consultation exercise with children in attendance at both schools involved in the proposal.

Officers of the Council also met with staff at both schools and provided opportunities to meet with Parent Council representatives.

2.2 The Parent Council and parents of children attending Bramble Brae Primary School are opposed to the proposal and want Bramble Brae Primary School to remain open as a school. They questioned the educational benefits as outlined in the proposal. They stated that the size of Bramble Brae as it stands meets the needs of their children well and did not believe moving to a larger school would enhance their children's education. They believe that Bramble Brae Primary School is the centre of their community and that the closure of the school would have a negative impact on the wider community. They felt that Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools serve two distinct communities.

Parents expressed concern about the walking distance and conditions to the proposed site of the amalgamated school and the possible safety implications for their children in relation to the routes to school including the crossing of Provost Fraser Drive.

Parents also expressed concern about possible traffic congestion around the new amalgamated school. Parents were concerned about the time it would take many parents and children to walk to the new amalgamated school in general, and in particular, in adverse weather. As all walking routes to the proposed school are uphill, concern was expressed by, and on behalf of parents, who would be pushing prams and/or be accompanied by young children. The time this would add on to the school day for children was a legitimate consideration.

They believed that children may not be able to benefit from after-school activities at the new amalgamated school due to the distance in walking home.

Other concerns of the practicalities involved in going to and from the new school were expressed and included, children not being able to go home for lunch, child care issues involving grandparents and others, and the resulting difficulties of some parents being able to return to work.

2.3 The Parent Council and parents of children attending Quarryhill Primary School are not in agreement with the proposal and want Quarryhill Primary School to remain as the school is at present. They stated that they believed that the size of Quarryhill Primary School as it stands meets the needs of their children well and did not believe that being in a larger

school would enhance their children's education as stated in the proposal. They felt that Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Schools served two distinct communities.

2.4 Parents and staff from both Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools expressed concerns regarding the implications of a larger number of children being educated in the current Quarryhill building. These concerns centre on the size of the classrooms at Quarryhill, any potential increase in current class sizes, and how this would support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and class management particularly for the older children.

Concern was expressed about the increased number of children moving in the corridor areas of the school, use of coat pegs and the increase in volume of children using the dining hall. Parents were unclear about the exact details of the necessary re-configuration of the building to accommodate the new amalgamated school. Particular concern was expressed about the re-configuration of the building which would be needed to accommodate the increased number of children in the nursery.

Staff and parents at Quarryhill sought assurance that the planned developments to the outdoor area would continue.

2.5 Parents and staff from both schools do not believe that the timescale set by the council is realistic. They are concerned that there may not be sufficient time for transition arrangements to support all children in the transition to the amalgamated school.

Parents and staff are also concerned about the future staffing arrangements should the proposal go ahead. There is a high deprivation level in the Bramble Brae catchment area and parents and staff have concerns that the enhanced staffing currently at Bramble Brae may not transfer to a new amalgamated school.

Support staff in both schools need early reassurance about their own positions.

Parents and staff from both schools are not aware of the impact of any financial savings of this proposal on the wider educational benefits to other children and young people across the authority.

2.6 Children who attend both Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools are not in favour of the proposal. They do not want their respective schools to change. Children feel that staff know them well and they would prefer to remain in a school of a similar size. They also benefit from a range of after-school activities available at present in their respective schools. Children from both schools are very happy with the way that their schools operate at present and do not want to lose their school's ethos and identity should the proposal go ahead and they merge and become a larger school.

2.7 Children from Bramble Brae are concerned about the location of the proposed amalgamated school and the increased distance they would have to walk to and from school, and the potential increase in the length of their school day.

2.8 Overall, parents, children and staff expressed concern about the future identity of the amalgamated school, including the school uniform and the name of the school. They would like more details about the merged school.



### **3. Educational aspects of the proposal**

3.1 The *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* sets out clearly the duties of a council with regard to its educational benefits statement. The main educational benefit that Aberdeen City Council puts forward in this proposal is that children's education will benefit from being in a larger school. The council asserts that through the proposal, children would benefit from a broader staff expertise and range of learning and teaching approaches. It states that in a larger setting there would be a greater flexibility in the groupings of children which would have a positive impact on learning and meeting needs.

At present, the educational benefits statement does not set out sufficiently convincingly how these benefits will be achieved. The current benefits are expressed only in general terms. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to set out the specific benefits for the children that will accrue from implementation of the proposal and how these will be achieved.

3.2 The council's proposal claims that the amalgamation would provide even more opportunities for school clubs and out-of-school activities. Parents have reasonable concerns that the increased distance which some children will need to travel at the end of the school day may prevent some children from benefiting from these activities.

Staff also have reasonable concerns that the suggested increase in out-of-school activities may not actually materialise due to the increased number of children using the same facilities currently operating at Quarryhill Primary School.

Consultees also expressed justified concerns that, with the increased number of classes in the new amalgamated school using the same gym hall, opportunities for all children to experience two hours quality physical education each week throughout the year may be restricted. In taking forward the proposal, the council will need to address these concerns appropriately.

3.3 In terms of attainment, the council states there is a broad similarity between the two schools. Whilst in some aspects children at Quarryhill appear to perform particularly well, based on data provided by the council, the value-added performance of children at Bramble Brae is amongst the highest in the city. This value-added factor of Bramble Brae has been recognised formally across the authority. The proposal suggests that the amalgamation of the schools can lead to sharing of the current best practice in both schools, in particular value-added improvements, leading to improved outcomes for a greater number of learners. It will be important to clarify how children currently at Bramble Brae who require additional support with their learning, will benefit from the additional support needs base at Quarryhill Primary School.

3.4 Both Bramble Brae Primary School and Quarryhill Primary School are currently operating under capacity. Implementation of this proposal will help the council address this issue and enable it to deliver its duty to secure best value through the provision of adequate and efficient provision of school education as set out in the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*.

The current occupancy rate at Bramble Brae is 81% and Quarryhill 54%. In session 2012/13, of the 217 children living in the Bramble Brae catchment area, 113 attend school.

For Quarryhill, of the 287 children living in the catchment area, 141 attend the school.

The roll at Bramble Brae is predicted to decrease and the roll at Quarryhill to remain stable.

The council rates both buildings as B (Satisfactory—performing adequately but showing minor deterioration) for condition and Quarryhill B with Bramble Brae C (Poor – showing major problems and/or not operating optimally) for suitability.

The council should clarify its position that access for users with a physical disability is more suitable in the Quarryhill building. Through this proposal, the council wishes to improve facilities for all children and address any weaknesses in accommodation at Bramble Brae.

3.5 Both Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools have their own nursery classes, the proposed amalgamation, with both nursery classes merging also, would have a similar impact for children due to start school in two years time as those currently attending. Both schools presently have nurseries registered for 20 children in the morning and 20 in the afternoon.

The proposal states that a new nursery for 40 children in the morning and 40 children in the afternoon will be created. At present there is a waiting list for both nurseries. The proposal as it is currently set out does not address the lack of capacity in nursery provision in the area.

3.6 Bramble Brae Primary School and Quarryhill Primary School benefit from productive links with Northfield Academy. At P7, most children from both Bramble Brae and Quarryhill Primary Schools transfer to Northfield Academy as the zoned school. The adoption of this proposal will therefore have no impact on transfer arrangements. Both schools also work closely with Northfield Academy and other associated primary schools in developing Curriculum for Excellence. If the council's proposal is implemented, transition arrangements and curricular liaison would be unaffected by the amalgamation.

3.7 Scottish Ministers have the right to call-in decisions to close schools. The current timeline for this proposal gives limited consideration to the possible impact of this process on the council's plans.

It will be difficult for the council to ensure that the appointment of a new headteacher, the development of management, staffing, curricular and transition arrangements and the necessary re-configuration of the Quarryhill building are in place to allow a smooth transition to a new amalgamated school, can be managed within the current timescale for this proposal. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to ensure that it provides sufficient time for effective communication with parents, staff and children to alleviate their concerns and ensure effective transitions for children from Bramble Brae Primary School and Quarryhill Primary to a new amalgamated primary school are in place.

3.8 There would be increased traffic congestion at the start and the end of the school day at the site of the new school. With an increased volume of children having to cross a busy main road, the council proposes to review travel plans to ensure safety should this proposal go ahead.

3.9 The council intends to minimise any adverse effects arising from the proposal by ensuring that an implementation strategy will be developed and communicated to parents and staff if the proposal is approved. This would include an exit strategy for the Bramble Brae building. Established links which already exist between the two schools would also help minimise these adverse effects.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 If the proposal is implemented it has the potential to broaden the staff expertise from both schools as it brings staff together and enable the greater sharing of current best practice. This will build upon the established links which already exist between the two schools.

However, in its current form, the proposal does not set out sufficiently clearly the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the children directly affected by it.

Parents and staff have justified concerns that the basis of the educational benefits statements relies too heavily on the assertion that children's education will be enhanced from being in a larger school. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to ensure that it sets out clearly and specifically how implementation of the proposal will meet children's needs better and improve the curriculum and the quality of children's learning experiences and the outcomes they achieve in the new amalgamated school.

4.2 The proposal has the potential to contribute to the council's efforts to secure best value within the context of addressing over-capacity in the council's school estate. As a result, the council may be able to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of children and young people throughout the wider council area. The council should outline any educational benefits to the wider education community of Aberdeen that will arise from achieving savings through the implementation of this proposal.

4.3 The council needs to give assurance to parents that any health and safety issues regarding the increased number of children in the new amalgamated school are identified and addressed. As stated in the proposal, any related traffic management and routes to school issues which arise if the proposal is implemented must be identified and addressed. In particular, the council should consult further with parents of children currently at Bramble Brae to ensure their concerns about the walking conditions to the new school and implications of these are alleviated.

4.4 The council has set a challenging timescale to take forward this proposal for amalgamation. In taking forward this proposal, the council needs to ensure that it provides sufficient time for further communication and consultation with parents, staff and children to alleviate their clear concerns and ensure effective transitions for all children affected by the proposal. Whatever course of action the council chooses to take, it needs to continue to consult with parents, children, and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal.

4.5 Aberdeen City Council needs to ensure that it addresses the concerns raised during the consultation period, including those set out in this report in its final consultation report. This includes the need to clarify the proposed configuration of the present Quarryhill building and the availability and suitability of teaching spaces within the new amalgamated school.

**Consultation Report on proposals to close Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and establish an amalgamated school within the existing Glashieburn building and campus from August 2014 and to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy.**

### 1. Methodology

All requirements of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, 2010* were met or exceeded.

### 2. Involvement of Stakeholders

#### (a) Public Events

Four public consultation events were held to discuss the amalgamation and re-zoning proposal for Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Number of Recorded Attendees</i>
Monday 2 September	afternoon	Jesmond Centre	38
Wednesday 4 September	morning	Jesmond Centre	48
Thursday 5 September	evening	Oldmachar Church	99
Tuesday 1 October	evening	Oldmachar Academy	132

#### (b) Other Engagement

Officers from Education, Culture and Sport also met separately with staff, representatives of the schools' Parent Councils and with groups of children from both schools. A synopsis of pupil voice submissions was also made available to members of Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

#### (c) Requests for Significant Additional Information

Officers also responded to a number of requests for additional information relating to the proposals for Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools. There were also an exceedingly high number of requests for additional information received as Freedom of Information Requests.

### 3. Feedback from Stakeholders

The number of responses received in different formats were:

<i>Format</i>	<i>Number of submissions</i>
Email	608
Written	31
Comment Cards	176
Petition	1

The paper petition had 2450 signatures. The petition supported retaining the existing two schools as separate establishments.

Paper copies of all submissions were made available in the Members Library and have been circulated to external members of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. Submissions, anonymised as necessary, were also made available on the council website.

#### **4. Education Scotland Report**

An essential element of the statutory consultation process is involvement of Education Scotland whose report is provided at the end of Appendix 2(a).

The report identifies some positive aspects of the proposal.

Paragraph 4.1: *'If the proposal is implemented it has the potential to broaden the staff expertise from both schools as it brings staff together, which may enable the greater sharing of current best practice'*.

Paragraph 4.2: *'Implementation of the proposal will enable the council to develop a strategy that will enable it to provide suitable and efficient accommodation for children across the north of Aberdeen'*.

#### Paragraph 4.2

*'The proposal outlines the impact of new housing developments on Middleton Park School. The proposal highlights the need to reduce expenditure on maintaining schools with lower occupancy rates and outlines a plan to address the knock-on effects of developments in adjacent school zones. As such, the proposal has the potential to contribute to the council's efforts to secure best value within the context of addressing over-capacity in the council's school estate. As a result, the council may be able to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of children and young people throughout the wider council area. The council should outline the educational benefits to the wider education community of Aberdeen that will arise from implementation of this proposal'*.

The report does not however support the view that the case has been made for the educational and pastoral advantages to pupils and potential improvements to attainment, achievement and educational aspiration that the proposed arrangements would provide.

In particular, the report identifies the requirement for the Council to address various elements within the proposal document.

## 5. Addressing Issues Raised in Education Scotland Report

The following table indicates areas identified within the Education Scotland Report and the Councils responses.

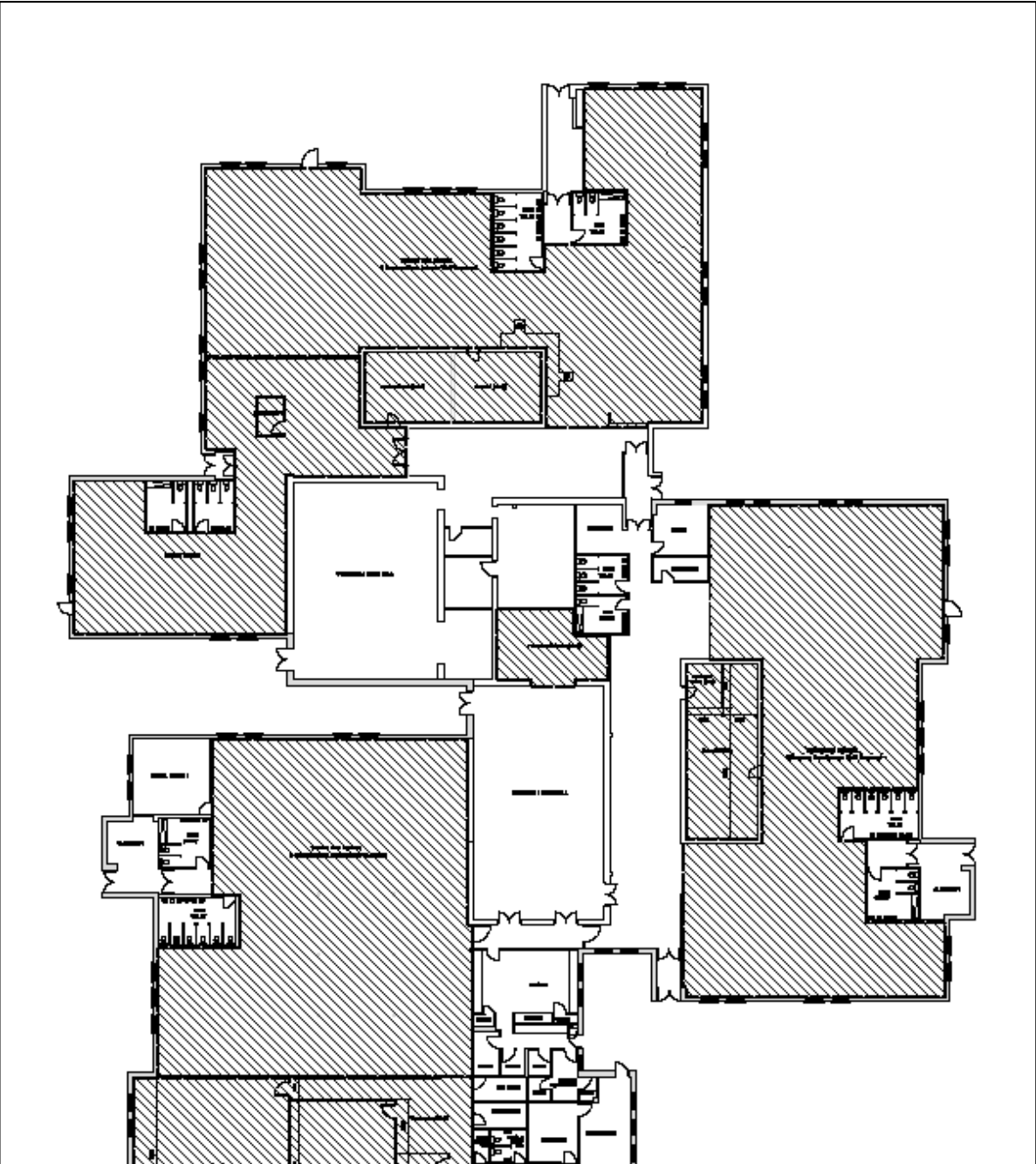
Issue	Proposed Action	Timescale
<p>4.1 In taking forward the proposal the council needs to set out more clearly the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the children directly affected by it.</p> <p>In particular, the council needs to set out more specifically how the implementation of the proposal will improve the environment for learning and enable the council to meet children's learning needs more effectively.</p>	<p>More pupils at the amalgamated school would be more likely to have the opportunity to work collaboratively with peers of similar abilities in paired or group work. Staff would have more opportunities to work with groups of pupils of similar abilities which will increase the opportunities for cooperative learning.</p> <p>The attached floor plan provides details on the potential layout of the amalgamated school and clearly shows the spatial relationships between areas. There are more areas which would be conducive to active learning than are currently available at either school. Both general classroom areas and activity spaces will provide significantly improved and flexible spaces for all pupils.</p> <p>The re-configured accommodation for pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) will be enhanced as will be more self-contained and there will be fewer possibilities for pupils within the base and in adjacent areas to distract each other. There will be enhanced security with the base being more controllable in terms of preventing unauthorised exiting by pupils.</p>	
<p>4.2 The council should outline any educational benefits to the wider education community of Aberdeen that will arise from achieving savings through the</p>	<p>The proposal would support the council's obligations to secure best value for the whole school estate, within the context of addressing over-capacity. The council would be in a position to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of all children and young people in other schools across the city.</p>	

<p>implementation of this proposal.</p>	<p>The council would be in a better position to plan a more efficient and effective school estate in terms of sufficiency and location of pupil spaces. This would be of benefit of those pupils in the existing catchment areas of Middleton Park and Glashieburn and for those in the new development at Grandhome.</p>	
<p>4.3 The council needs to ensure that it fully addresses these concerns in its final report. In particular, the council needs to clarify any proposed layout and structure for the amalgamated school, showing the teaching and learning spaces.</p>	<p>As in section above, the attached floor plan provides a clear indication of the proposed internal reconfiguration of the building. The indicative cost of the internal works at the school is likely to be £2.1 million.</p>	
<p>4.4 The council has set a challenging timescale to take forward the proposal for amalgamation. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to ensure that it provides sufficient time to consult and communicate effectively with parents, staff and children to alleviate these concerns. Whatever course of action the council chooses to take, it needs to continue to consult with parents, children</p>	<p>The range of works required is significant and it is now proposed to carry out the works over two summer holiday periods, rather than during only summer 2014. It is therefore proposed that the amalgamated school would open in August 2015, thus providing additional time to plan the successful transition.</p> <p>This will allow the works to be completed without the risk of over-running and avoiding potential disruption to learning and teaching. This will also reduce costs as there will no longer be a requirement for evening and weekend work.</p> <p>An implementation plan will be provided for staff and parents. Comments on this will be sought and any suggestions for improvements will be incorporated.</p>	<p>Preparation (January to March 2014) and implementation summer 2014 and summer 2015.</p>

<p>and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal.</p>	<p>The community would be fully involved in planning the integration of the two school communities.</p> <p>A working group to oversee the transition to the new school would be established and would meet regularly to ensure a smooth transition to the new amalgamated school.</p>	
<p>4.5 The council has a duty to investigate and decide what, if any, action is required to correct these alleged omissions and inaccuracies.</p>	<p>The council believes that the information in the final version of the consultation document to be a true indication of the situation at the time of publication. Some information, such as current pupil numbers, changes over time. The data regarding forecast pupil numbers and measured dimensions within the schools are robust and reliable.</p>	
<p>4.6 The council's final consultation report needs to give more information about and set out clearly the educational benefits and timescales of the council's plan to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy.</p>	<p>There was a dependency between the proposal to amalgamate Middleton Park and Glashieburn School and the proposal to rezone part of the Middleton Park catchment area to Brimmond School.</p> <p>The educational benefits of the re-zoning would be that, assuming the amalgamation progresses, there would be significantly better areas in the Glashieburn building and campus for learning and teaching. It would be extremely challenging to accommodate all the additional pupils from the Grandhome Estate development within the amalgamated school until such time as the first new school is delivered within the development. There is less urgency in progressing this proposal if amalgamation of the two schools does not take place. There will be however, a requirement to deliver a new school within Grandhome by 2017, otherwise the capacity at Middleton Park will be close to being exceeded.</p>	



Diagram 2: Floor Plan, Proposed Amalgamated School at Glashieburn



**Consultation proposal by Aberdeen City Council**

**Report by HM Inspectors, Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to close Glashieburn and Middleton Park Schools and establish an amalgamated school within the existing Glashieburn building and campus from August 2014 and to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn 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.

As the council is proposing to close a school, it will need 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 the opportunity for representations to be made to Ministers.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The report from HM Inspectors 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 1 October 2013 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;

- consideration of further representations made directly to HM Inspectors on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the sites of Middleton Park School and Glashieburn School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

### 1.3 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
- 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*. The consultation included four public meetings held in September and October 2013 and invitations to submit written responses, by email or to complete a pro-forma. The consultation period ran from 26 August to 11 October 2013. The council received a large number of responses to its proposal. This included a petition which was signed by 2040 people. None of the responses supported the proposal. A member of staff from the council undertook a consultation exercise with children in attendance at both schools involved in the proposal. Officers of the council also met with staff and parent representatives of both schools to discuss the proposal.

2.2 Parent Councils in both schools submitted detailed documents, along with a joint document, against the proposals. Parents in both schools expressed concern in relation to the capacity of Glashieburn School to accommodate the expected number of children within the primary school, nursery classes and Additional Support Needs (ASN) base. They were also concerned about the significant loss of outdoor space, the lack of time and facilities for physical education and whole school events, and the arrangements for lunchtimes. Parents were concerned about the potential impact of increased class sizes on their children's progress. Parents at Middleton Park School value the very positive ethos which they believe their school provides. They are pleased with their children's progress and the learning experiences which the school provides. Parents do not feel that the proposal, if implemented, would be of educational benefit to their children. Parents and other stakeholders expressed concern about potential difficulties in relation to traffic management at Glashieburn

School and the possible adverse impact on children's safety. Parents expressed concern regarding the lack of any clear plans for the proposed new layout of the school which did not appear until late into the consultation. Parents expressed concern about the timescales of the proposal, particularly given any building work which would have to take place. Parents expressed concern that the figures which the council provided for school roll forecasts and house building forecasts were inaccurate.

2.3 Almost all children consulted disagreed with the proposal. They are concerned about the possibility of being in larger classes and that there would not be enough space in the school for everyone. They had concerns that they would all be cramped. They believed that they would have access to less outdoor space, particularly the current Middleton Park School pupils. They are concerned that there would not be enough hall space for everyone to have physical education, whole school assemblies or shows, and they may not have enough time to eat at lunchtime. Children at Middleton Park School are particularly concerned about the loss of their eco garden and their large grounds. Children are concerned that they might be split up from friends and siblings, along with the fact that they will not have as many opportunities to be captains or leaders in a larger school.

2.4 Staff in both schools expressed concerns over the proposal, submitting responses from each school. Middleton Park School staff were strongly opposed to the proposal. They did not feel the proposal would bring educational benefit to the children. Staff from both schools were concerned at the lack of space indoors and outdoors, the negative effect on delivery of the health and wellbeing programme and the limitations of use of hall time for other activities such as assemblies, parental events and physical education. Middleton Park staff expressed concerns that nursery provision would be negatively impacted upon, with an increase from 20 to the proposed nursery class of 60 children altogether with very limited opportunity for free-flow learning indoors and outdoors. Middleton Park staff felt the proposal implied that they were currently not collaborating, sharing learning and offering innovative experiences to the children. Middleton Park staff expressed concern about the period of consultation. They felt they had not been fully involved, consulted or informed throughout. Staff from both schools expressed concern and anxiety at the timescale of the proposal, particularly as building work may need to be done; time will be needed for the recruitment of a new headteacher; and time would be needed for planning and for organising the transition of children. Staff from both schools also expressed concern over job security.

### **3. Educational aspects of the proposal**

3.1 The proposal sets out Aberdeen City Council's view that implementation of the proposal will improve the educational experiences of learners and will improve the life chances of young people. The main educational benefits the council claims for the proposal are children will benefit from access to the amalgamated and larger school and that this will provide an improved learning environment for children and a better working environment for staff. The council's proposal also states that additional benefits will result from having a larger staff with a broader range of experience and expertise. At present, this case is not convincing. The overall educational benefits set out in the proposal are too general. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to set out the specific benefits for the children that will accrue from implementation of the proposal and how these will be achieved. In particular, the council needs to

explain more specifically how the proposal will improve the environment for learning and improve arrangements for meeting children's learning needs.

3.2 Both Middleton Park and Glashieburn Schools are operating under capacity. Implementation of this proposal will help the council address this issue and enable it to deliver its duty to secure best value through the provision of adequate and efficient provision of school education as set out in the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*. The roll at Middleton Park is 168 (plus 20/20 nursery) with a capacity of 240. The roll at Glashieburn is 261 (plus 40/20 nursery) with a capacity of 420. In both schools, a significant proportion of children (36% in Middleton Park and 43% in Glashieburn) attend through placing requests from parents who live outwith the school catchment area. The combined roll of the proposed amalgamated school may exceed the capacity of the Glashieburn campus.

3.3 The council's proposal asserts that the amalgamation would provide more opportunities for extra-curricular activities and experiences for more children. These include providing increased opportunities, particularly in the upper stages, for children to take more responsibility and experience leadership opportunities. However, the proposal does not set out sufficiently clearly how the amalgamation will result in this outcome. Children in both schools currently benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities and experiences and take on responsibilities such as leadership roles, supporting others, acting as committee members and representing their school in the wider community.

3.4 The proposal states that the combined school will provide a greater range of more flexible areas where the available space can be used for investigative work and active learning. However, the proposal does not contain layouts for the amalgamated school. The council have stated that details of an implementation strategy will be developed and communicated to parents/carers and staff if the proposal is approved. The council shared a number of possible layouts of the Glashieburn campus towards the end of the consultation period. Both schools currently provide a range of flexible areas and space. On the available evidence, it is difficult to justify the council's view that implementation of the proposal will provide increased access to flexible areas in the amalgamated school.

3.5 Children at Middleton Park School currently have access to extensive outdoor areas. These are larger than those on the Glashieburn campus. The proposal would see a major loss in outdoor space. Under the proposal, the nursery classes in Middleton Park School which are currently for 20 children in the morning and afternoon will become for 60 children in the morning and 40 in the afternoon on the Glashieburn campus. These children will have reduced access to outdoor play areas and will be in a class of a much increased size. There is also a risk that pressures of accommodation in the Glashieburn campus will reduce opportunities for children across the primary stages to benefit from two hours high quality physical education a week.

3.6 Glashieburn School is the current location of the base for children with ASN for the Oldmachar Academy Associated Schools Group. Although the council claims that the proposal for the larger amalgamated school, including adaptations to the ASN base, will make it easier to provide the support individual children require, the proposal does not currently set out sufficiently clearly how implementation of the proposal will improve arrangements for meeting the needs of these learners.

3.7 The Act requires the council to include an analysis of how the authority intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal. The proposal does not sufficiently assess the effects of the proposal on the impact of the children in the nursery classes in either school, or on the children in the ASN base in Glashieburn School.

3.8 Middleton Park School and Glashieburn School both benefit from productive links with Oldmachar Academy. At P7, children from Middleton Park and Glashieburn Schools transfer to Oldmachar Academy. Both schools also work closely together currently and with other primary schools and Oldmachar Academy as part of the Associated Schools Group, in developing the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. The adoption of the proposal would therefore have no impact on transfer arrangements, and curricular liaison.

3.9 The proposal states that a new headteacher would be recruited and appointed to lead the amalgamated school. The council will also need to undertake enabling works at Glashieburn in preparation for the amalgamation. Despite the fact that the proposal does not contain layouts for the amalgamated school, the council has indicated that these are likely to be relatively minor and could be completed over the summer holiday period in 2014. Scottish Ministers have the right to call-in decisions to close schools. In taking forward the proposal, the council will need to consider whether its current timeline provides sufficient time for effective consultation and communication with parents, staff and children to alleviate their concerns and ensure effective transitional arrangements for children as they move from both schools to the new amalgamated school at Glashieburn. This is particularly important for children with ASN who are directly affected by this proposal.

3.10 The council's proposal sets out its plan to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy. The council has indicated that the current zoning arrangements cannot be sustained as the projected pupil numbers at Middleton Park will exceed capacity by 2018, due to the proposed housing development at Grandhome Estate. The proposal contains roll forecasts for the implications of the housing estate. Staff and parents queried council figures, roll projections and stated that planning permission had yet not been granted for the housing developments. The council has considered other options for re-zoning and believes that this preferred proposal would have advantages for the longer term planning and management of schools in the whole of the north of the city. There is little reference and no education benefits statement relating to the second proposal to vary the delineated catchment area of the schools. The final consultation report needs to provide more detailed explanation of the benefits of this aspect of the proposal.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 If the proposal is implemented it has the potential to broaden the staff expertise from both schools as it brings staff together, which may enable the greater sharing of current best practice. However, it is not sufficiently clear how implementation of the proposal in its current form will bring educational benefit to those children directly affected by it. Concerns of parents and staff that the basis of the educational benefits statements overly relies on children's education being enhanced from being in a larger school are valid. In taking forward the proposal the council needs to set out more clearly the specific benefits that implementation of the proposal will bring to the

children directly affected by it. In particular, the council needs to set out more specifically how the implementation of the proposal will improve the environment for learning and enable the council to meet children's learning needs more effectively.

4.2 Implementation of the proposal will enable the council to develop a strategy that will enable it to provide suitable and efficient accommodation for children across the north of Aberdeen. The proposal outlines the impact of new housing developments on Middleton Park School. The proposal highlights the need to reduce expenditure on maintaining schools with lower occupancy rates and outlines a plan to address the knock-on effects of developments in adjacent school zones. As such, the proposal has the potential to contribute to the council's efforts to secure best value within the context of addressing over-capacity in the council's school estate. As a result, the council may be able to make more efficient and equitable use of its resources to the benefit of children and young people throughout the wider council area. The council should outline the educational benefits to the wider education community of Aberdeen that will arise from implementation of this proposal.

4.3 During the consultation, the council received a large number of responses from a wide range of people and organisations. Respondee included parents and families, parent councils, children and young people, staff, the local community council, church, and other individuals and groups. All respondees were opposed to the proposal and raised a number of legitimate concerns. These are summarised in this report. The council needs to ensure that it fully addresses these concerns in its final report. In particular, the council needs to clarify any proposed layout and structure for the amalgamated school, showing the teaching and learning spaces.

4.4 The council has set a challenging timescale to take forward the proposal for amalgamation. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to ensure that it provides sufficient time to consult and communicate effectively with parents, staff and children to alleviate these concerns. Whatever course of action the council chooses to take, it needs to continue to consult with parents, children and staff of both schools and the wider community to engage them fully in the implementation of its proposal.

4.5 Parents have alleged that the proposal document contains misleading statements. Parents claim these include omissions and inaccuracies in roll projections and housing developments. The council has a duty to investigate and decide what, if any, action is required to correct these alleged omissions and inaccuracies.

4.6 The council's final consultation report needs to give more information about and set out clearly the educational benefits and timescales of the council's plan to vary the delineated catchment area of Middleton Park, Brimmond School and Bucksburn Academy.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
November 2013**