



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**CONSULTATION REPORT
REGARDING THE REPLACEMENT OF
MARKETHILL SCHOOL**

AUGUST 2015

**This Consultation Report has been issued by Education & Children's
Services of Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Schools
(Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

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1. THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26 March 2015, Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning & Leisure Committee authorised the launch of a statutory consultation regarding the delivery of a replacement Markethill Primary School in Turriff. The Proposal Document was issued to those individuals and bodies listed under Distribution within the proposal document.

The Proposal Document was also published on the Council website:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/education/EducationConsultations.asp>.

The Proposal Document made clear to consultees that the consultation period would run from Monday 30 March 2015 - Friday 29 May 2015 – a period of 32 school days in total.

The proposal on which the consultation took place was that:

Education provision at the existing Markethill Primary School should be discontinued with effect from July 2017.

Pupils of the existing Markethill Primary School and future pupils from the Markethill catchment area should continue their education at a new primary school located at Meadowbank Road from August 2017.

- 1.1.1 The proposal document stated that the catchment area for Markethill Primary School would not change with the new location. All pupils currently zoned to Markethill Primary School would continue to be zoned to the school and would attend the new establishment.

1.2 Educational Benefits Statement

The Proposal Document contained within it an educational benefits statement. That statement drew upon concerns about the increasing pressure upon the capacity at Markethill Primary School and the increasing school roll. The new Markethill Primary School will be built with an increased capacity of 505 pupils. This capacity takes into account all allocated housing sites in the Local Development Plan.

The educational benefits statement noted that the replacement school will have sufficient core areas that additional accommodation could be provided for a future increase in school roll, should this be required. A four classroom extension has been outlined on the building plans so that, should this be required in the future, it will merge easily with the new build school.

2. THE PUBLIC MEETING

- 2.1 A public meeting was held on Wednesday 20 May 2015 at Markethill Primary School. The meeting was attended by 10 people including parents, an elected member, staff and members of the community. A full note of the meeting is available on our website (at the link provided in 1.1). There were several

comments and questions raised and there was a feeling of overall support for the replacement school.

- Capacity of the proposed new building
- School Transport and Road Safety
- Schedule for completing the new school
- Disposal of the current school
- Early Years provision in Markethill

2.2 Discussions with Pupils

As part of the consultation process, the head teacher from Markethill Primary School posed a short set of questions to pupils about the proposal to build a replacement school. A summary note of responses from the pupils is appended (Appendix A).

3. **WRITTEN RESPONSES**

One written response was received by email. This contained comments supporting the replacement school as it would be more spacious with additional community facilities and the new location would release traffic congestion.

4. **EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS**

4.1 Educational Benefits

For Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, educational benefit to pupils affected by the proposal is the key issue. Pupils are already accessing high quality education at Markethill School, and parents are happy that their children are receiving quality education in their chosen setting. There are however increasing concerns that the rising pupil population in Turriff will restrict that education if the status quo continues.

The provision of a replacement Markethill School will relieve the physical pressure on the current school which is currently working at full capacity, thereby providing better physical environments for learning and teaching.

The current Markethill School includes classrooms in temporary accommodation units. All pupils in the new build school will be taught in the main school building.

The new Markethill School will be built with a new sports hall which will significantly enhance opportunities for P.E and will improve pupil safety as the Baden Powell centre will no longer be used to deliver P.E in the winter months.

4.2 School Transport/Parking

At the public meeting questions were raised about entitlement to school transport and availability of parking spaces.

Pupils are entitled to free school transport if they live more than two miles away from their zoned school. Pupils living within two miles are not entitled to transport. However if there are available seats on an existing transport contract then parents can purchase a 'privilege seat' for their child at an annual cost of around £100.

It is anticipated that with regards to transport, only a small number of pupils will be affected by the replacement school being built on a different site. The council will work with families affected during the transition.

The replacement school will have adequate parking and pick up/drop space for staff and parents of both primary and nursery age pupils.

4.3 Capacity of the replacement school

A concern was raised at the public meeting regarding the size of the replacement school and if there would be enough space for the housing in the Local Development Plan. The replacement school capacity will be 505 pupils, however the new school building is being designed with sufficient flexibility to expand the core facility of the school to 600 pupils at a later date if required, without the need to add temporary accommodation.

Education & Children's Services have closely monitored the school roll forecast and take into account all sites in the Local Development Plan and monitor developers build out rates.

4.4 Other Specific Issues

There were questions raised regarding what would happen to the current building. The council are looking into all available options regarding the future use of the building and the land.

5 EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

5.1 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full (Appendix B).

5.2 Education Scotland acknowledges the proposal to replace the existing Markethill School with a new school building located at Meadowbank Road has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Markethill School and the local community.

5.3 Education Scotland acknowledge that the capacity for the replacement school takes into account all the allocated housing development sites in the Local Development Plan. There are also provisions in place should the school need an extension. The new building will provide increased social spaces which will support active learning and collaboration between groups of children. They also note that the replacement school will include spaces for family learning, and will

facilitate more co-ordinated early years and childcare provision within the town of Turriff.

- 5.4 Education Scotland agree that Aberdeenshire Council has consulted on the proposals with children, parents, staff and members of the local community. Consultees are optimistic about the potential of the proposed new school to increase opportunities for them to be involved in their children's education as a result of the small break-out rooms and activity rooms within the new building. Members of the community also stated that they were very positive about the potential of the new school to act as a community hub providing high quality sports facilities and opportunities for better co-ordinated early learning and child care provision for local families.
- 5.5 Education Scotland also noted that stakeholders were confident that the council would make suitable arrangements to manage the anticipated increase in the volume of traffic in the residential area adjacent to the site of the replacement school.
- 5.6 Education Scotland noted that the council is aware that in taking forward the proposal, it will need to put suitable traffic management arrangements in place around the site of the proposed school.

6. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that:

After the Education Authority has received HMle's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to

- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period,*
- (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meeting,*
- (iii) HMle's report.*

Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the written representations. The Education Authority's position is set out in this document.

6.2 Conclusions and Recommendation

The Council now has 4 broad options, namely;

- (a) Adopt the proposal; or
- (b) Amend the proposal in a minor way and adopt; or

- (c) Amend the proposal in a significant way and undertake a further consultation exercise on a new proposal; or
- (d) abandon the proposal and maintain the status quo.

If the council adopts the proposal it would be on the basis that the educational benefits set out in the proposal document would materialise. There would be a requirement that the Council continues to work closely with stakeholders including community groups and parents to ensure that any concerns raised are addressed.

Whilst the timescales for the project are not expected to change, officers recommend that a level of flexibility is built into the physical relocation for pupils and staff. Officers recommend that the wording of the proposal is amended so that the existing school will close on completion of the new building at Meadowbank Road during the 2017/18 school session, following a suitable transition period.

There are no obvious ways of significantly amending the proposal other than possibly postponing its implementation or by selecting a different site.

Stakeholders, parents and the wider community recognise the need for the replacement school and are supportive of the proposal. There have been no reasons identified through the consultation process to abandon the proposals at this stage.

6.2.1 The recommendation of officers is that the Council should adopt the proposal for a replacement Markethill School at Meadowbank Road.

APPENDIX B – NOTE OF MEETINGS WITH PUPILS

Markethill Replacement Consultation – Pupil Questions

Primary Pupils – Markethill School

The school that you come to at the moment is going to be rebuilt in another part of Turriff. The new school will open in August 2017, this means that some of you will go to the new school when it is built, and some of you will have already finished P7 and will have gone to secondary school when the new Markethill School opens. Even if you will have moved on to secondary school, you will have a chance to say what you think the new Markethill School will be like.

One of the things we have to do when we are thinking about building or moving a school, is to talk to all of the children who will go to the school to find out what they think about it. We will also ask all the mums and dads what they think too, but this is your chance to tell us about it.

1. What do you think might be some of the good things about a new primary school?
2. What do you think might be some of the bad / not so good things about a new primary school?
3. Is there anything that worries you about the new primary school?
4. Is there anything that you are excited about at the new primary school?

Summary of Markethill Pupil Responses
Q1. Bigger classrooms, more classrooms, bigger hall, lockers, bigger playground, better playground, library, bigger cloakrooms, bigger toilets, more toilets, new gym hall, football pitches, more space and better things outside, separate canteen and gym hall, more parking, it will be amazing because it will have a dining room, more grass spaces, space for more pupils if others come to stay at Turriff, shelter outside if it rains, meeting new friends, better sports facilities, more ICT space.
Q2. Won't hold the memories, getting lost, will take a long time to build, some pupils will take longer to walk to school, losing a dog walking area-need a new one, it is very far from my house, be very different from this school, they might miss this school, might not be a hill to play on outside, miss our own school, P1's have settled here then they have to move.
Q3. Fear of change, takes longer to get there for some, being late, not knowing where to go at first, the playground might be too small, it might be too close to the road, split up from friends, moving to a new school from one your happy in, feel strange, where to line up, I will be shy on my first day, memories of Markethill being lost.
Q4. New classrooms, new hall, more freedom, having different things to do and use, to see the new playground and football pitch, to see the new big hall, Cool to have your own new classroom, more fun things in the playground, will be bigger, seeing around the new school, a separate lunch and PE hall, make new friends, new teachers, bigger and nicer school, exploring the new school, more up to date equipment, close to relatives house, football pitches, pride in new school, better provision for wet weather and PE, It's going to be so big.

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeenshire Council to replace the existing Markethill Primary School with a new school building which will be located at Meadowbank Road, Turriff.

1. Introduction

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 Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to replace Markethill Primary School with a new school building which will be located at Meadowbank Road, Turriff. 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.

1.1 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.

1.2 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 Markethill Primary School and of the proposed new school building, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Aberdeenshire 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 formal consultation ran from 30 March 2015 until 29 May 2015. The council placed a notice in the local newspaper and posted the consultation document on its website. It issued copies of the document to all parents of pupils currently attending Markethill Primary School and to local community groups. Further copies were made available in Turriff library. A public meeting held on 20 May 2015 was attended by ten stakeholders. The council made arrangements to gather children's views about the proposal. The council received one written response. Prior to the statutory consultation the council held stakeholder engagement events to inform residents of Turriff about the rationale for the proposal. Stakeholders have been involved in identifying the site for the proposed new school.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to replace the existing Markethill Primary School with a new school building located at Meadowbank Road, Turriff has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Markethill Primary School and the local community. The existing school building has a capacity of 360 pupils and the current school roll is four hundred and fifty-six. The school roll has remained high over the past decade and is forecast to continue to grow as the population of the town increases as a result of approved housing developments.

3.2 The existing building is rated poor for suitability. There are insufficient core facilities and some children are being taught in temporary accommodation units. There is insufficient social, cloakroom, storage or outdoor learning space. The school finds it challenging to deliver the entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence within the existing building, for example it is not possible to provide two hours of high-quality physical education for each of the 17 classes. Activities of local groups, including a nursery support group and a toddler group which currently use the school for community purposes are restricted through lack of space.

3.3 The capacity of the proposed new school building is five hundred and five. This takes account of allocated housing development sites within the local plan. The new school will also have provision for a four classroom extension, should this be required in future. There will be more space per pupil than at present. Plans include a sports hall and pitches and an outdoor learning and play area which will enhance children's health and wellbeing. All classrooms will have direct access to outdoor areas. The new building will provide increased social spaces which will support active learning and collaboration between groups of children. Accommodation will include spaces for family learning and will facilitate more coordinated early years and childcare provision within the town of Turriff by providing different services at the

same location. The new building will include up to date information and communications technology equipment which will enhance learners' experiences.

3.4 Children, parents, staff and members of the local community who met with HM Inspectors were very positive about the prospect of a modern purpose-built primary school building for the town. They were well-informed about the proposal and keen for matters to progress without delay. Children are looking forward to having more space for learning and being able to have physical education lessons within the school and in well-designed modern outdoor games areas. They thought that the improved facilities would lead to a greater variety of out-of-school sports and activity clubs for them to join. Parents were optimistic about the potential of the proposed new school to increase opportunities for them to be involved in their children's education as a result of the availability of small break-out rooms and activity rooms within the new building. Members of the community were very positive by the potential of the new school to act as a community hub providing high-quality sports facilities and opportunities for better coordinated early learning and child care provision for local families. Stakeholders were confident that the council would make suitable arrangements to manage the anticipated increase in the volume of traffic in the residential area adjacent to the site of the proposed new school.

4. Summary

Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to replace Markethill Primary School has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Markethill Primary School and the local community. It has very strong support from stakeholders and will provide opportunities to enhance family learning and parental involvement in children's education. It will help the school to overcome the challenges of delivering the entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence within restrictions of the existing accommodation. The community will benefit from valuable sports facilities and from opportunities to develop well-coordinated early learning and child care provision for local families by providing different services at the same location. The council is aware that in taking forward this proposal, it will need to put suitable traffic management arrangements in place around the site of the proposed new school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
June 2015**