

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeenshire Council to rezone secondary catchments at Lumphanan.

November 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeenshire Council's proposal to rezone secondary catchments at Lumphanan. 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 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.

1.2 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
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 14 September 2023 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Lumphanan Primary School and Aboyne Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeenshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council undertook the consultation from 5 September to 3 November 2023. The proposal was made available to stakeholders, including parents, and was published on the council website. A public meeting was held on 14 September 2023 at Lumphanan School. One parent attended the public meeting. The council received 64 responses to the online survey about the proposal. The majority of respondents were parents. Forty respondents agree with the proposal with 20 disagreeing. Of those that left comments on the survey, those who agree stated that they felt it was important that children from the area could attend the same secondary school as their peers at Lumphanan Primary School. The biggest concern raised by respondents, both those who agree and disagree, was around the lack of capacity at Aboyne and Alford Academies. However, it

should be noted that the school roll at Aboyne Academy is projected to reduce over coming years. Whereas, Alford Academy has an increasing school roll. A few respondents suggested that whichever is the best route to school needs to be taken into account, especially for winter travel.

2.3 Staff at Lumphanan Primary School and Aboyne Academy undertook consultations with children and young people at their school. The 10 young people from the area covered in the proposal, who attend Aboyne Academy, all agree with the catchment of the area moving to Aboyne Academy. All children at Lumphanan Primary School support the proposal. They think it is important that they can all go to the same secondary school.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council have set out clear education benefits to this proposal. This proposal would see catchment areas changed to make all of the catchment area for Lumphanan Primary School be in the catchment area for Aboyne Academy. Currently a small area is zoned to Alford Academy. In practice, all children from the area affected currently go to the Aboyne Academy through placing requests. Given this, the proposal should not see any change to the current rolls at either Aboyne or Alford Academies. HM Inspectors agree that there is benefit in children being entitled to attend the same secondary school as the peers in their primary school.

3.2 Children and young people who spoke to HM Inspectors support the proposal. Children from the area want to progress to the same secondary school with the friends they have made at Lumphanan Primary School. They think it would be stressful not to do so. Children and young people stated that most of the out of school activities or clubs they attend happen in Aboyne or other towns along Deeside. None of the children and young people that HMI Inspectors spoke to go to out of school activities in Alford. Young people said that travel, especially by public transport, was easier to Aboyne than to Alford from Lumphanan. Headteachers who spoke to HM Inspectors, confirmed that this proposal would formally recognise existing arrangements. Lumphanan Primary School undertakes some learning opportunities with other schools in the Aboyne Academy school group. This includes activities to support transition from primary to secondary school. The headteachers agree with the proposal.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there will be benefit in resolving this long-standing catchment anomaly. It will give assurance to children that they will be entitled to progress to the same secondary school as their peers. It will remove the current need for parents to complete placing requests. It supports transition arrangements and reflects where children and young people mainly go for out of school activities. The council should give consideration to the wider issues around the capacity of secondary schools that stakeholders have raised through this consultation.

**HM Inspectors
November 2023**