

# **Crosshouse Information Evening**

**15 January 2018**

**As agreed, these are the main points raised through the formal processes of the meeting and not a formal minute.**

**Officers present:** Alan Ward, Tina Gaitens, Gail Allan, Kirsty Thomson, John Wilson, George Corbett, Mark Hunter, Aileen Hollywood, Anne Richardson, Irene Hall, and Helen Donnelly

## **Main points noted:**

Mr Ward opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He explained that the focus of the evening was to provide information to parents and carers about the proposed decant to the community building. East Ayrshire Council is reviewing the school estate along with all authorities across Scotland to ensure that school buildings and locations can deliver maximum educational benefits for our children and young people. It has become clear that capacity at Crosshouse Primary is reaching a difficult point. Mr Ward believes that decanting Primary 5, 6 and 7 pupils to the community building is the best option.

**There are 179 pupils in mainstream classes and 49 pupils in the Communication Centre, so why is the school over capacity if the planning capacity is set at 372?**

- The planning capacity is based on mainstream school figures and does not take into account the small numbers in Communication Centre classes. There are 8 classes in the Communication Centre capped at 6/7 pupils in each.

**Is the community building fit for purpose, particularly the playground space?**

- The square meterage per child had been calculated and considered to be sufficient.
- In addition to the external space currently allocated to the community centre, the space around the language centre will also be used for children to play.
- Following further concerns about playground space, Mr Ward agreed to contact Andrew Kennedy, Head of Facilities and Property Management, for confirmation.

**Who allowed the school capacity to reach a difficult point?**

- The school estate is reviewed on an annual basis and both numbers of mainstream and children with ASN fluctuates.
- The number of children in the Communication Centre has continued to increase.
- A paper will be presented to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 requesting additional funding for Crosshouse.
- It is anticipated that forthcoming works will require a decant.
- In the interim, this is an opportunity to enhance the quality of educational space for both mainstream and CC pupils.

**The increase in numbers to the Communication Centre is to detriment of mainstream pupils.**

- A decant will be required anyway with the anticipated scope of works for the building.

**The December 2014 Cabinet Paper notes that 31 children attended the Communication Centre at the time. Why were more children accepted after 2014 when at that point East Ayrshire Council recognised that the Communication Centre was at capacity?**

- The budget has been revised to acknowledge the increased numbers.

**Why after 4 years is there no blueprint for the extension?**

- All 32 Local Authorities in Scotland have a Capital Programme which reprioritises projects as required.
- This is a temporary situation until we know full scope of works.
- We knew a decant of some description would be required to allow works to go ahead.

**There is no money, no plans and no timescale?**

- There is a budget a commitment for East Ayrshire Council to improve the school estate including Crosshouse.
- If funding for an additional scope of works is agreed, it is likely that children wouldn't be back in the school before 2018-2019.
- The decant is a temporary measure but the new classrooms won't feel like temporary classrooms to the children as they will be set up as they are at present.

**How can the decant be beneficial if Primary 5-7 pupils will not socialise with Primary 1-3 pupils? It's not a school it's a community centre.**

- The spaces in community building will be an excellent environment. Teachers will ensure that the new rooms look like the current school environment.

**If children were always going to be decanted why were parents not informed during registration?**

- It was a relatively recently decision to decant Primary 5-7 to the community building.

**What do I do if my child genuinely doesn't want to go?**

- Mr Ward advised parents to speak to Mrs Gaitens or himself if their son/daughter won't attend school. He explained that he would not sanction the decant if he thought it would be detrimental to the pupils. He encouraged parents to talk to staff and give it a try.
- Parents have the right to make a placing request to another school or submit a formal complaint to East Ayrshire Council which will be logged.
- One parent stressed the importance of being positive about the situation in order to help children adjust to the change.

**How will children cross the road? I'm concerned about Playingfield Road traffic.**

- A Crossing Patrol Officer will be in place to cross at the church before and after school and at lunchtime.

**After the Cabinet meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January will you know the date the extension will start? Will you know the date when the full school decant will happen?**

- We won't know an exact date at that point but we will begin consultations with pupils, teaching staff and parents and develop a plan.

**Will clinics still take place during the school day at the Community Centre?**

- Audiology clinics will be ongoing and managed securely by the janitor.

**Why can't the children go to Grange Academy?**

- Grange Academy does not have the capacity for the numbers.

**The main school building has a secure entry system, how will this work in the Community Centre?**

- The janitor will manage entry to the building as she currently does for the ECC.
- Children will be escorted into the building by their teacher and the door will be secured.
- Any children arriving late will enter through the main entrance managed by the janitor.

**Will parents be able to see the new classrooms in the Community Centre?**

- An open afternoon will be arranged.

**What about assembly?**

- Yes we will continue to have assemblies.

**Why was it left until 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017 to send out the letter to parents?**

- Mr Ward stated that he had to be absolutely sure works could be carried out by 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 before he informed parents.
- As soon as this was confirmed and to avoid speculation, Mr Ward issued the letter just before the end of term.

**Why were children taken over and introduced to their new classrooms before letters were handed out to parents?**

- This was a well-intentioned gesture by school staff so that children could see the proposed new classrooms.

**Why has it taken 4 years to decide that these works need to be done?**

- As mentioned earlier, priorities change. The emergency decant of Netherthird Primary is an example of how costs and programmes of work have to be re-prioritised.

**What if a Scottish Government inspection dictates that the Community Centre is not fit for purpose?**

- Plans are in place to ensure that the facility will be fit for purpose.

**Will children get an extra 3 days off school?**

- Mr Ward will seek permission from the Scottish Government for exceptional closure. When permission is granted, he will inform parents. He anticipates that only 1 day will be required.

**Have portacabins been considered as an alternative to the decant?**

- Yes portacabins were considered but they are prohibitively expensive and they would take up a large amount of space in the playground.

**Could the existing library and science rooms be used as an alternative to the decant?**

- It is considered that the best solution is to move Primary 5, 6 and 7 to the community building.

**Will you consider the library and science rooms as an alternative?**

- No plans are in place.

**How will Primary 4 pupils be kept safe on the upper floor during the works?**

- No work will be carried out immediately in the school.

**When are children going to be consulted on the decision to decant to the Community Centre?**

- A decision was taken in December that this was best solution for all children. Children will be consulted on the larger scope of works.

**Why can't Primary 5-7 pupils have their lunch at the main building?**

- Lunches will be prepared as normal and transferred to the community building where a dedicated lunch area will be set up.
- Mrs Gaitens considered all pupils continuing to have lunch in the main building but she was concerned that pupils would lose 5 minutes teaching time before and after lunchtime by walking to the main building. Parents commented that if lunches were served at the main building then children would have access to better playground space and they would feel included. Point noted.

**Why is the decant happening now? Why not when Primary 7 finish in the summer?**

- Mr Ward believes that learning will be enhanced with the provision of STEM and IT provision and enriched with additional transition activities with Grange Academy staff.

**Will the Community Centre external areas be resurfaced?**

- The children will not enter the school via the carpark.

**Why do the nursery staff not know about the decant arrangements?**

- The letter was issued to Primary 5-7 school parents. Mrs Gaitens will work with ECC staff to discuss transitions between Primary 6 pupils and ECC children which will be easier to facilitate if both groups are in the same building.

**Are you prepared to consider any other options to house all pupils in one school?**

- The decision has been made by a number of officers and we will take in to account all points made at this meeting.

**Do you agree that you have not followed legislation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010?**

- No.

**If the move is temporary, why such a long time over at the Community Centre? Can the works not take place while children are in the school?**

- The scope of works has still to be established.

- It is unlikely that the children would be able to remain in the school while the works are carried out.

**When work starts will the school be decanted anyway? Will there be 2 decants?**

- We will have an enhanced facility from February 2018 to give us the opportunity to plan future work.

**Who made the ultimate decision? If told why, parents may have had more of an understanding.**

- A group of officers made the decision based on their experience of works in other schools.

**Will Crosshouse Primary accept more children while my child has been moved to the Community Centre?**

- All placing requests will be considered on an individual basis.

**Why are the new build houses included in Crosshouse Primary's catchment area?**

- They are not in Crosshouse Primary's catchment area.

**What are the arrangements for pupils who travel to school in a taxi?**

- Plans are being considered and parents will be informed.

**Other points noted:**

- As long as the environment is happy, safe and children are learning.
- There are currently very little IT facilities, the existing IT room was cleared for increased roll with failing internet connection, iPads (not the new version) have never been upgraded.
- IT part of the curriculum, children denied highest possibly levels of numeracy and literacy.
- There is no money to improve IT facilities but you are allowing more children to enrol. My daughter only has 5 months left at the school.
- My child is already anxious about transition to secondary school.
- I can see positives and negatives going from part of a school community to a 3 class community.
- Lack of respect and no consultation with parents.
- I have a Primary 5 child who attends the Communication Centre. He has difficulties interacting with others and has been integrating with mainstream pupils. I feel that the proposed segregation will put an end to what the school have been trying to achieve over the last 2 years. Can the panel provide complete reassurance that same level of integration will be fulfilled and that they'll Get It Right For Every Child?
- A small group of children expressed concern that the playground is too small and that they are not happy about moving to the Community Centre. They questioned what will happen at lunch time and if they will see their younger brothers or sisters. They stated that they understand the move to make space for the Communication Centre classes.
- Life skills will be lost being over there.

- No matter what the trip is for, the time will be lost regardless.
- Parent wants as much as possible integration.
- East Ayrshire Council is not Getting It Right For Every Child.
- East Ayrshire Council has not got it right for consultation.
- The buddy system is a credit to Primary 7 pupils. This was a good school until now. We want our children to stay together.
- Extension and works have been lumped in with plans for the decant. This is a red herring as no date has been given.
- There should be a follow up meeting with more details.
- This is being used to divide the Communication Centre and mainstream pupils by some parents who have made derogatory comments.
- The work needs done and it's up to parents to prepare their children to cope with change.

### **Responses to points noted:**

- IT colleagues are working to reboot them so that they can be used to their potential.
- The school has 2 sets of laptops with charging units which are timetabled for use.
- The school has developed close links with IT education officer to ensure children are developing their digital learning.
- The new facility will allow for further STEM and IT activities and enhanced transition links with staff at Grange Academy.
- It was always our intention to consult on the larger scope of works.
- The decision to decant was not taken lightly. We have the Communication Centre located within the primary setting to ensure there are opportunities for inclusion if and when appropriate. Each individual child's needs are considered and bespoke opportunities are provided for them and this will not change.
- There is an increased number of classroom assistants who will continue to support the children at all times.
- Opportunities for social inclusion (where appropriate to the child) will be maintained e.g. golden time, lunch/play times, extra-curricular activities, etc.
- Staff see this as an opportunity to further develop the campus. The ECC is located in the community building at present. Our campus is widening and we will ensure that Communication Centre children won't miss out on opportunities for integration after the move.
- We'll do all we can to mitigate against any impact on the children.
- We'll do our best to maintain the buddy system and there is potential to enhance this.

Mr Ward concluded by stating that he would be happy to meet with any parents to discuss further and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.