

Public Consultation Meeting
Auchinleck Primary School
12th March 2015

A Ward
Parents
Jackie Hanlon, Head Teacher

You mentioned percentage of schools - is each one over 40% of proposed campus?

Yes, it definitely qualifies as a merger. Figure apply for when we start consultation.

Do you know the number that will attend the school in 2019?

This is not an exact science but we have the figures for all establishments up until 2019. It doesn't matter if school roll reduces thereafter – it will always be classed as a merger.

You say you're going to speak to the children – how can you ask such young children and get a right response? You're talking to the wrong children surely?

We have to comply with legislation. Common Ground Mediation area experts in their field and can manage the discussion – even with very young children. Although I am happy for you to put that in as a concern.

Authority will develop slick transition programme to ensure partner primary school not in campus get equal access to specialist staff/learning spaces – particularly due 1+2 languages, STEM priority

There will be systematic, planned activities.

Would you cap school roll – where will all the children go?

This would only apply to the new merged primary school. All pupils who currently attend Auchinleck and Cumnock Academies would be entitled to attend the merged academy.

EAC has a commitment to maintain standards for all buildings – including the schools involved in this consultation if it does not proceed any further. EAC would look to put in additional staffing for first couple of years to ensure high quality transition. This will ensure all pupils are well supported.

How will you ensure pupil safety throughout the course of the build?

Very high Health & Safety standards have to be met. School would be built in phases and public meetings will be held at planning stage with all stakeholders so concerns can be raised and plans can be discussed.

Can you guarantee there will be Further Education provision there?

No, not guarantee. The £63.5 million proposed is for the school only. Preliminary discussions have taken place with Ayrshire College who are keen to make provision on campus. At this stage, however, it is simply a set of proposals.

You've no idea how much that will cost?

The proposed college and any business hubs will not be paid for by EAC but rather from Business Enterprise and the college. This set of proposals is designed to really improve young people's education so it is right to include discussion about Further Education and businesses at this aspirational stage. FE being on campus is a great bonus to the learning of the young people.

If you're talking to weans, you can't say the college will definitely be there.

But if I said I guarantee it was there, you'd say it was a done deal.

How much will the savings be per year?

£1.29 million each year

If build goes over, that will eat into savings made. I'm just trying to think of what else that money could be spent on.

Some people argue that schools should be refurbished but it's an upheaval and does not see same educational benefit.

What are the educational benefits of a new school vs refurbishment?

Speaking from experience I would not want to go to anything other than campus. Restrictions of design of 40 year old building don't enable opening up for learning that a new build does.

If people in college/business are over 18, will they be vetted?

At moment pupils travel to Kilmarnock/Ayr for college. It would be those pupils whom I would see benefitting from the on-site college input. They would simply be able to remain on the same campus but be able to access Further Education provision without having to travel further afield. There will be appropriate checks on employees and the campus would be spread so that young children are not located right next to the college.

Does being in a new school boost attainment? Would you not say learning and teaching, support of parents, motivation makes biggest difference? Will children be more motivated than now?

We need to work on transition so that pupils reap the benefits straight away. I can't say with scientific evidence that moving school raises attainments but changes in approach leads to improvement – changes in expectation level great benefit for secondary to work with primary.

The design is crucial. You are asking us to make opinions to make decisions on something we can't see. Children with hearing impairments need design to go well – not like in Auchinleck Primary School.

We have learning valuable lessons about design and what makes a difference. EAC has made efforts to research best fit. I am not saying it will or won't be open plan. I suggest that you complete an internet search on "new school build" to see what can be achieved. We will work with architects to create a visionary space including use of space/light/etc.

Is Broomfield the only proposed site?

Yes, it's the only one big enough for large campus, outdoor learning facilities and sporting facilities. Sport Scotland oversee access to sporting facilities and will ensure they are replaced should anything need to be removed to accommodate the new building. There were set criteria for the appropriate site – it had to be owned by EAC and be big enough for campus model being suggested.

Prince Charles has land so building there will enable him to sell for expensive house. There are businesses in Auchinleck who rely on schools. They'll be disadvantaged. Have any business owners responded to the proposal?

Not themselves but parents have responded on their behalf.

In £63 million, is there a cost for crossing the river? 1400 kids have to cross the river – is there a new bridge included?

Yes, everything that is factored into plan will be included in funding.

Have you considered there a sewage works?

Environmental impact studies would have to be completed. None of this can or should be completed until the build is definitely proceeding.

Is there money for transport? There will be lots of car drop offs. The whole site of Cumnock Academy will be used. Traffic will be a nightmare.

People feel strongly about traffic and representation has been made.

Don't agree to folk getting free school meals getting free transport – working parents being penalised again.

£1 million has been assigned specifically for safe walking routes. There are a number of national policies at work. The local authority is keen to get people to walk to school or cycle where possible.

It is not fair that pupils who live slightly further away will arrive dry and my child will be soaking. What happens to subsidised transport for after school clubs?

Schools are given budgets to ensure pupils can access excellent sport facilities.

I think it's a safety issue for so many people to have to walk.

Funding has been assigned to try to address safe walking routes as described before.

This plan will only segregate the two communities. More Cumnock kids go to that campus but Auchinleck have to fit in. Why would anyone invest when there is nothing in this community? You are not 'Getting it Right for Every Child' as there will be 2000 children so you can't get it right for all of them.

There are processes and structures which already exist in all of the establishments involved which ensure that each young person is known and not missed. If a young person operates under a guidance teacher just now, they will have the same guidance teacher after the merger.

Visions in Cumnock, Cumnock Rugby Club, Main St businesses will all benefit. How will Auchinleck benefit? We have best school in Scotland with best head teacher and we are being penalised. There should be a site in Auchinleck, not Cumnock. Can you tell me that site 100% suitable?

Corporate Infrastructure colleagues have suggested that from the preliminary planning that has been conducted. Obviously there will be further tests and studies which need to be completed but they cannot and should not be completed at this pre-planning stage. A new build will enhance the education for all young people across the area which is what we are focusing on.

If there is less than 60% occupancy, can you not move Cumnock pupils into Auchinleck Academy?

EAC is committed to improving facilities. Both buildings could get to being beyond reasonable cost to refurbish or improve in 10 years. We think this would not be cost effective, nor will it ensure the best educational provision for the young people involved.

The whole proposal is to the detriment of the Auchinleck community.

One year ago we opened consultation on Barshare PS and Greenmill PS which did not conclude as the site was not suitable. Elected members did not make decision. I have made considerable effort to create these proposals so I believe that this will ensure the best educational future for these communities but the community and elected members may not agree.

How long did it take you to make that up?

Approximately six weeks was spent compiling the proposal document along with discussions.

Public have a lot less time to make decision.

We've tried to build in enough time to read and digest the document, attend public meetings and put comments down in writing. We have done more than we are legally required to do – in terms of numbers of meetings and in the length of the consultation process as we want to ensure that as many people in the communities as possible get a chance to respond.

If new school is going to be so advantageous, how did you decide schools?

Each year the council completes an assessment of each establishment and rates each one for suitability. For example, Auchinleck Academy has only 1 lift that would not meet the current standards for disabled children now in terms of size and access. EAC has to work with DDA. Greenmill PS, for example, is on multiple levels and that site wouldn't be suitable for rebuild there with a building that would meet today's standards regarding accessibility.

I want to be clear that this is nothing to do with provision of schools at present. Head Teachers and their staffs are working exceptionally hard and are providing a good service.

How will you choose new HT for the academy?

As the proposal outlines, this is clearly defined as merger – posts have to go to public advert.

What about cooks, cleaners, etc? Will they all be laid off?

Positions such as the catering staff are dependent on uptake for school meals – it is highly unlikely we will have to lose staff. Classroom Assistants allocated differently Nobody will lose their job – redeployment will be used but only if necessary. All guidance staff will move across to the new school.

What opportunities are you going to give kids if campus doesn't go ahead?

That is a less clear picture. Money isn't sitting there for any purpose. EAC will only borrow for a new build. We know, however, that the thing that makes biggest difference is high quality teachers every day. If the consultation is not approved it will not be revisited.

Were elected members invited to this meeting?

Not specifically to this one but have attended others and are aware of the calendar of meetings.

What will be the maximum class sizes in secondary?

SNCT negotiates such matters and ensure that maximum class sizes have to be adhered to. They might increase a little – from say 22 to 26. HT and SMT will make arrangements to ensure that class sizes are equitable.

Will they merge in with Cumnock kids in classes?

We would expect the schools' improvement plans and curricula to come together before 2019 to ensure subject choices will be aligned. There can, for example, be stark differences between S1-S3 curricula across schools so they would need to try to harmonise that. Lots will be done in advance.

What will you do to police the children on campus?

Safety of pupils in school is a major priority. As far as policing is concerned there will be a full time campus officer. Behaviour and conduct on campus great priority – great feedback from current seniors – they don't see the communities coming together as a major issue. Preparation work goes on years in advance, there are already joint projects. Residential activities, for example, will be arranged and the youngsters will take a role in leading that.

Auchinleck and Cumnock Academies are under occupancy – do you feel children will slip through the net in such a big school? Will you miss things such as a child who is experiencing bullying?

If the new school has double the roll of Auchinleck Academy at present, it will have double the amount of teachers. Guidance staff will move across in the merger and will have responsibility for the same young people so there is continuity. Schools know their young people very well – regardless of the size of establishment. They use formal methods – such as SEEMIS for monitoring and tracking for tracking a young person's progress as well as less formal methods.

Why is occupancy as low in both schools?

The population has dropped in this area since the schools were first built.

Majority of 16/17 olds don't go to university but they have to move to work. Transport links need to be improved to bring employment to the area.

We are trying to get young people close to the workforce. Traditionally, Scottish schools had focused on 5 Highers as standard for success. That was totally wrong. There is now wider recognition of a full range of courses and pathways. EAC are just as keen as you to encourage businesses back into the area.

Nothing comes into area and nothing goes out. EAC have no foresight. They need to change things radically.

The new Community Plan is keen to address transport links and wider community issues specific to each area. Schools can make a change by engaging with partners so they tell school where the needs are in term of employment and match those courses.

Mr Ward offered to arrange for interested parties to visit existing campuses in the authority (St Joseph's and Grange Academies in Kilmarnock) and would liaise with Mrs Hanlon to facilitate this if required.

When will we know if this is going ahead?

August at earliest. Formal consultation closes then EAC will create a response to the process. This will be presented to Cabinet in June and, if referred to Government, could take 18 months.