



Proposal to change the catchment area for Hillhead Primary school, Oakgrove Primary school, Anderston Primary school, Garnetbank Primary school, Hyndland Primary school and Thornwood Primary school.

Proposal to close Kelvin Park Early Years Centre and use the teaching areas for infant classes from Hillhead Primary school

Response from Hillhead Primary School Parent Council

Catchment area consultation

Hillhead Primary Parent Council broadly supports the proposal to consolidate the catchment area for Hillhead Primary. The current catchment area of Hillhead Primary reflects the bringing together of the catchment areas of the four schools merged in 2011. No move was made at the time to assess whether this very large catchment area was going to result in capacity difficulties for the new building. This has clearly emerged to be the case and it is important that steps are taken to address this issue.

The Parent Council, however, does not support the proposed changes as they currently stand. A number of concerns can be highlighted:

- **Community links.** The consultation states that “Curriculum for Excellence confirms the importance of a school’s links with its local community. There is an expectation that community links are embedded into the life and work of every school and that community based activities will prepare them for future roles in society”. Under the current proposal, however, a large part of the immediate community of Hillhead Primary would be removed from its catchment. This includes much of the Woodlands and Park areas. Existing links of the nature described in the consultation, for example with Woodlands Community Garden, would be removed from the school under the proposed changes.
- **Community cohesion.** Further to the above point, the current proposal divides the Woodlands area into three separate parts, sending children from each part to a different school. This is damaging to community cohesion and directly affects informal community support networks, such as informal shared childcare, which regularly underpin the ability of individual families to balance work and childcare commitments.
- **Ethnic diversity.** Hillhead Primary is a very ethnically diverse school, a fact that is welcomed and embraced in the ethos and outlook of the school. The removal of large parts of the nearby Woodlands area would seriously impact this diversity to the detriment of the school.
- **Distance and walk to school.** Glasgow City Council actively encourages children to walk to school and a relatively high proportion of Hillhead Primary pupils are able to

do so. The proposed changes keep in the catchment children living in areas with a walk of over 1km but remove children living only 400m away. Children who currently are able to walk to school through the safe environment of the park will be moved to schools requiring a longer walk across main traffic routes.

A further concern of the Parent Council relates the *treatment of siblings*. The consultation document states that “the consultation process will facilitate exactly what ‘priority’ would mean in practice should the proposal be approved”. The Parent Council would like to propose the following approach to the treatment of siblings:

- Siblings of current Hillhead Primary catchment area pupils who come out of the catchment as a result of its redefinition should have the same right of entry as future catchment children.
- This could be time limited to 7 years after the change is implemented by which time all current Hillhead Primary children will have moved on to secondary school.

Kelvin Park Early Years Centre (KPEYC)

Hillhead Primary Parent Council supports the removal of the KPEYC from the site of Hillhead Primary in order to provide necessary space for the pupils of the school.

This position reflects the following context:

- The Parent Council have been in talks with GCC for a year in an attempt to identify solutions to the issue of space in the school. Options investigated have included buying the house as well as a range of other possibilities to rework the existing building to create more space. None of these have been taken forward by GCC for a variety of reasons including planning permissions, practicality and financial considerations.
- The space issues facing the school are critical and long term. The school already does not have enough classrooms with two Primary 7 classes currently being taught in what was the media suite. Without additional space, in 2015 the school will have a roll in excess of 680 children and every room in the school, apart from the gym/dining hall, will be required for teaching.
- The media suite was not designed to be used as a classroom with important implications for noise, teaching style and the ability of children to concentrate and learn to their maximum potential. The use of the media suite as a double classroom was agreed strictly as a temporary measure and not an ongoing solution.
- The consultation proposes an annual cap of 90 to “allow for the future release of current teaching areas ensuring that General Purpose areas are made available to allow increased flexibility for learning and teaching”. Hillhead Primary is a three stream school and GCC has stated that the recommendation for vitally important general purpose (GP) rooms is one per stream. This was the case when the school opened in 2011 with the use of 21 classrooms, two classroom sized GP rooms and the media suite. However, with a consistent cap of 90, the school roll will never fall below 630 which translate into a permanent requirement for 22 classrooms, leaving only one other GP room and the media suite.
- Lack of GP space affects expressive arts, music, first stage English as an additional language learners and inclusion needs; it diminishes opportunities for active learning, and keeps children at their desks all day. Combined with Scottish weather, this means less physical activity, less room for imagination and experimentation, less scope for varying activities to keep children engaged. It affects the staff’s ability to deliver

effectively the Curriculum for Excellence and for all the additional and inclusion needs of a school of this size.

- The number of catchment area children will have to fall considerably to reach the Council's target of 90 – in 2014 there were 137 registrations from within the catchment and at least 20 placing requests, many of which were for siblings of children already in the school.
- There is no guarantee that catchment reduction will deliver a fall in numbers. Rising population, the popularity of the school, numbers of siblings falling outside the new catchment will all make the reduction slower.

Hillhead Primary was inspected by Education Scotland in June 2013 and the report awarded the school Very Good categories across the board. This represents a very significant success given the fact that the four school merger had only been in place for two years at that point. However a number of findings in the **HMI report** are now being threatened by the lack of space in the school, the lack of availability of GP rooms and the pressure on the gym hall and playground space. These include:

- *“Pupil voice is valued at Hillhead and children are active participants in initiatives such as eco groups, pupil council, fair trade committees, international education and buddying activities”*. While the school continues actively to promote pupil involvement, the lack of breakout space makes it difficult for these groups to meet and operate as effectively as they could.
- *“Information and communications technology (ICT) is used well across the curriculum”*. The former media suite is now in use to teach two Primary 7 classes. Other mobile ICT teaching options are now coming into use but the wifi connection remains unreliable in the teaching area creating problems for the use of stand alone I pads in particular. Given the scale of the school, the removal of the media suite represents an important loss.
- *“Children requiring additional support and including those with English as an additional language are making very good progress through careful planning and targeted support offered by teachers and support staff”*. While some support activities would take place in a classroom setting, the lack of GP rooms has a direct impact on the delivery of certain types of additional needs support. This particularly affects support for children requiring a quiet environment as the use of the social space and corridor areas for break away groups is noisy and often distracting.
- *“Staff provide children with a very broad curriculum, taking account of Curriculum for Excellence... Visiting specialists, including parents, enrich learning in art and design, sport and music”*. The lack of GP rooms, once again, has a direct impact on the staff's ability to most effectively deliver the broad curriculum with a corresponding impact on the children's educational experience. This affects all subjects and creative arts, which are an integral part of a basic primary school education and elaborated in the Curriculum for Excellence, cannot be properly taught in a classroom context for many reasons.
- *“The headteacher provides highly effective leadership....supported by a very able management team...who share his vision”*. The Parent Council completely endorses this view of the school's management and is deeply concerned that intolerable pressure is being put on the school's leadership and staff to manage such a huge roll with insufficient space at a time when staffing cuts are also being imposed. This intolerable pressure could increase staff turnover.

As part of the public discussion in the consultation process, various options have been cited as possible short term solutions to the space issues at Hillhead Primary which would allow KPEYC to stay on site. While welcoming discussion on the full range of options possible to

address this difficult situation, the Parent Council believes there are serious problems with most of the possibilities put forward to date.

- The issue of timescale is critical. Some of the alternative suggestions which have been raised are predicated on the assumption that the space issues are short term and therefore that the proposed solutions would only be necessary for a couple of years. We do not believe that the issues are short term and therefore any solution needs to be sustainable in the medium to long term.
- Portacabins in the playground would not only remove essential playground space for the large number of children in the school but the Parent Council has also been told by GCC that planning permission would not be granted.
- The option to decant Primary 7 pupils to any alternative site would affect the whole school community. It is a key transition year educationally and socially and important activities are built into the school to give P7 pupils confidence and responsibility as they move to high school. These would be lost if the P7s were isolated on a different site. There would also be important ramifications for staffing. The HMI report stated that “Transition arrangements for children moving from nursery to P1 and for those in P7 moving to the local secondary school are very effective”. These arrangements for P7 would be profoundly affected if the P7 classes were not on site. While a removal of KPEYC would obviously affect the transition arrangements from nursery to P1, not all children from KPEYC come to Hillhead and well over 50 percent of children coming into P1 will come from other nurseries.
- The option to use offsite facilities for regular GP or teaching purposes is associated with many difficulties, the two obvious ones being loss of curriculum time and staffing implications. The time involved in organising and walking classes to off site facilities, even close by, setting up the required activities and then walking the class back would considerably cut into teaching time, particularly if this was being done regularly and across many different classes. A class of 30 children would require a minimum of 3 staff to accompany them. This would be extremely difficult to achieve regularly, particularly in the light of ongoing staffing cuts, and importantly would take support staff, who would otherwise be supporting children and teachers in many class situations, out of the building purely to accompany children to off site locations.

In the light of all of the above, therefore, the Parent Council supports the removal of KPEYC from the site because urgent solutions are required to the critical need for space and alternative options which are suitable for the medium to long term have not been able to be identified.

It is important to note the following proviso to the support for the consultation proposal:

- The consultation proposes the closure of the EYC and the dispersal of children to alternative nursery places in neighbouring nurseries.
- The Parent Council would ask GCC to relocate the KPEYC in its entirety to an alternative site. There has never been any question that KPEYC is an excellent facility and its relocation would allow that to continue with its staffing team intact. It is also very evident that there is an urgent and considerable need for early years care in the area which is currently not being met. The waiting list for KPEYC is considerably longer than the number of children who currently have places – an indication not only of its popularity but also of the need to extend provision in this part of Glasgow. A relocation and possible expansion of the KPEYC should be considered as a matter of urgency.
- Hillhead Primary Parent Council would like GCC to investigate the feasibility of using the following sites as potential options for the relocation and possible expansion of KPEYC:

- Former Napierhall Street school building
- Former Kelvinhaugh school building
- Former Willowbank school building
- Space in Anderston primary school currently occupied by Psychological Services NW Area
- A new build option on land between Kelvinbridge subway and Gibson Street.
- A new build option on the Western Infirmary site which would fit within the proposed use category for the site and the Glasgow City Plan.

It is understood that financial investment would be required for any of the above options. However, the seriousness of the space and overcrowding issues facing Hillhead Primary and the long term impact on the children and staff of the school mean that this is not a situation where either a quick fix or tinkering around the edges will be sufficient. Together with the high and currently unmet demand for early years care in the area, the only appropriate response to provide a long term and effective solution will require corresponding financial investment. We believe that this is critical for the benefit of all the children, families and staff involved in this difficult situation.

Mandate

Hillhead Primary Parent Council obviously represents a very large body of parents in a school with a roll of 680 children. It is not possible to know or take into account the opinion of every parent in this response. However, the Parent Council believes that this response broadly represents the opinion of the majority of parents for the following reasons:

- Attendance at two Parent Forum meetings held this year on issues of space in the school and the broad support given at these meetings to the process and outcome of discussions to try to resolve the problems.
- A vote in the Parent Council on 23 April to support with regret the closure of the KPEYC in the absence of any alternatives which could viably resolve the problem. This vote was not unanimous but the overwhelming majority were in favour.
- Over 350 letters signed and sent to GCC and local Councillors in March asking for a solution to the space issues. While this specific outcome was not stated as discussions were still underway to try to identify alternatives, the volume of support shows the level of concern among the parent body for the crisis of space in the school.
- We recognise that there are parents among the parent body who will have a different view of how the catchment area should be changed but the majority agree with the overall concerns cited in this response.
- We also recognise that there are those among the parent body who are firmly against the removal of the KPEYC from site. Some parents with children in both facilities would continue to back KPEYC staying on site for a variety of reasons although there are parents in this situation who would back its removal in recognition of the needs of the primary school education. However, it is important to note that we recognise there are parents who would not agree with this response.

Thank you for your consideration of this response.

Hillhead Primary Parent Council.