

Council recommends closure at Castlebrae

A [report](#) detailing the outcome of a recent consultation on the proposed closure of Castlebrae Community High School will be considered at the Council meeting on 14 March 2013. A decision will be made by Council at that meeting on whether or not the school should close from the end of the 2012/13 school year. The report details the extensive consultation process undertaken, responds to the main issues raised during the process and provides recommendations on how to proceed.

The [report](#) concludes that pupils at Castlebrae continue to experience very poor educational outcomes as a result of the very low roll and that the needs of young people in the Castlebrae catchment area would be better met at neighbouring schools where there is capacity to do so. It recommends that current pupils at Castlebrae Community High School would be offered a place at Portobello High School, although parents could choose to send their children to other city schools if places are available.

The Director of Children and Families, Gillian Tee, considers that the case for closure is strong. She said:- “I am recommending the closure of Castlebrae Community High School as, with all things considered, I strongly believe that pupils will receive a better education elsewhere. This is not a recommendation which has been made lightly; all responses received and views expressed during the extensive consultation process have been carefully considered.”

“For those issues that were raised we have looked at the impact and whether we can provide solutions to ensure concerns are addressed. Should the closure be agreed we will work tirelessly to ensure the proposals I am putting forward will help address these concerns and ultimately ensure the best outcome for the young people of Castlebrae and the wider

community.”

In the [recent budget](#) the Council reaffirmed its commitment to delivering a new secondary school in the Craigmillar area and funding of £618,000 was set aside for initial work in 2017/18 on the intended new school which it is currently projected will be required in 2020. Regeneration will bring more families into the area for which a new, modern school will be necessary once the pupil numbers in the area rise to a level that requires it.

A variety of opinions and concerns were raised within the consultation responses. Two of the most frequently cited issues surrounded the potential impact on community activities that currently run at the school and whether vocational training would also be affected. The report details how both programmes could be accommodated elsewhere, with popular community activities being re-provided locally and arrangements being put in place to ensure vocational training continues to be provided for pupils at their proposed new school.

Some concerns were expressed about the difference in distance that pupils would have to travel and also about the safety of some routes to the proposed new school. Although no issues were identified regarding the availability of safe walking routes to Portobello High School, in response to the concerns raised it is being recommended that free home to school transport is provided for those pupils who would transfer to Portobello High School.

Issues were also raised about the costs of having to provide new school uniforms; to help address this it is proposed that £10,000 be made available for replacement uniforms for those pupils transferring to new schools.

Further to this, substantial support will be provided to help pupils transition to their new school to help ensure they have

the best possible start there. A proposed annual reinvestment of £120,000 into the Craigmillar area would provide additional support for pupils who would move from Castlebrae Community High School and those in catchment primary schools.

It is also being recommended that, should closure be agreed and the school demolished, any income arising from the disposal of the site would be ring-fenced towards the cost of delivering a new secondary school in Craigmillar.

The detailed report on the findings has been published and will be considered at the City of Edinburgh Full Council meeting on 14 March 2013.