

The making of Greenfield Academy: Uniting Braeview Academy and Craigie High as Dundee's biggest school [© The Courier](#)

Head teacher and campus leader Johnny Lothian is overseeing the merger of two school communities into one with 1,500 pupils.



Craigie pupils Campbell Kirk and Ollie Maxwell, Johnny Lothian and Braeview pupils Ava-Grace Mcguire and Daiyna Murray at Drumgeith Community Campus

Soon-to-be Greenfield Academy pupil Ava-Grace Mcguire is a social butterfly and can't wait to add to her friendship circle.

But amid the excitement there's a lot of nerves, particularly among P7s starting at Dundee's biggest secondary school in August.

It's the job of head teacher Johnny Lothian to ensure all 1,500 of his pupils settle into school life on Drumgeith Community Campus.

And it's one that started some time ago.

"We're all in the same boat," he says.

"Everyone is on a transition; the whole school, not just the P7s.

"Transitions can be challenging but it's about effective planning, making sure that the right support is in place."



The public entrance to Drumgeith Community Campus

Ava-Grace is in S4 at Braeview Academy which will merge with Craigie High School at the new £100 million campus, previously known as East End Community Campus.

Living nearby and frequently passing the Drumgeith Road site where it is being built, she has watched construction with great anticipation.

During a visit to see progress, she says: “I’m a social butterfly through and through. I’ve run out of new friends to make at school so this opens up a whole new book for me!”

‘Some of the younger people are anxious’

She recognises the move to a school with 1,500 pupils will be daunting for others. Particularly so for the new S1s who haven’t had the usual chance to visit their secondary.

“Some of the younger people are anxious,” she says. “I think that’s because the people they are with now they’ve been with them from primary school.

“Coming to a new building with a lot of new people as we merge with Craigie is a lot.

“But it will be good for them.”



Looking up in Greenfield Academy.

She and Daiyna Murray have led pupil consultation on school identity in Braeview. Doing the same for Craigie are Campbell Kirk and Ollie Maxwell. All are in S4.

And all are enthusiastic about the [new building and facilities](#), which includes two all-weather sports pitches, a pump track and recording studio.

Fellow pupils will have greater subject choice as the staff and curriculum pathways from both schools are combined.

And they will leave behind ageing schools in poor condition for well-equipped classrooms and modern teaching areas.

From Portakabins to shiny new classrooms

Ava-Grace says: “We’ve been in Portakabins as long as we’ve been in high school so it will be nice to have a building like this.”

“And to go between classes without getting soaked!,” adds Daiyna.

Other improved facilities Daiyna is eager to see include a bigger and better computer lab and library.

“The library will be good for [studying for] exams, being able to come in and use it after school,” she says.

For Ollie, the sports pitches are the biggest attraction.

“I’m into sports so that will be pretty good,” he says.



Greenfield Academy has two floodlit all-weather pitches

Pupils at Craigie, he says, are excited but have lots of questions.

“People are obviously going to have questions because we’re moving to a big new school.”

He and Campbell have spent some time listening to those questions and concerns, as well as suggestions and hopes.

“We’ve been involved since the start of second year,” explains Campbell. “We’ve been in board meetings, we’ve gathered views and we made a presentation to share those views.”

A new tie, uniform and identity for Greenfield

Since [becoming campus leader and head teacher last November](#), Johnny has been listening to that input as part of wider consultation on the merger.

“Young people had the chance to give their views, however crazy their ideas might be, and I’m confident people feel they were heard.

“From that, these guys [Ava-Grace, Daiyna, Ollie and Campbell] presented to me as head teacher about what was important to young people.

“That really informed our next steps.”

This included creation of a new tartan for the Greenfield tie.



Dundee fashion designer Hayley Scanlan and S3 Craigie pupil Elidh Shearer with her winning design for the Greenfield tartan, which has blue for Braeview, black for Craigie and green for Greenfield. Image: Dundee City Council.

And it involved choosing the name, which is after Greenfield House market garden.

Johnny says: “There were some great and interesting names put forward but the young people felt they needed a name that was unique and nodded to the locality.

“Importantly they wanted it to be positive and reflect their vision for the school as a positive, successful learning community.

“Greenfield Academy references an old market garden situated right where we are standing [the community entrance] that grew produce, sold it to the local community and contributed to the local economy.

“That’s a really strong message. Also the whole idea of Greenfield, cultivating learning and nurturing growth.”

Taking the best bits of Braeview and Craigie

In combining the two schools, Johnny is eager to bring their best elements and respect their histories.

“Both school communities are unique and strong school communities in their own right.

“It is important to engage with and listen young people, families and staff about what aspects are meaningful to them and what is really successful, and we need to make sure we bring that with us.”

All staff from both schools will transfer to Greenfield Academy.

There have been more placing requests for pupils living outside the catchment area than either Craigie or Braeview would normally expect.

That reflects anticipation for the new building and facilities, which Johnny says will be “beyond anything else we have in the city”.



Campus leader and head teacher Johnny Lothian surveys the plans for the ‘magnificent’ new building. But his priority is creating a safe, calm and welcoming school

He regularly shares updates and videos of progress on what he describes as a “magnificent” building with pupils of both schools and associated primary schools.

“They are super, super excited,” he says. “We got a spontaneous round of applause from a group of P7s I met recently!

“Both learning communities are in buildings that are dated, that require investment.

“Right here they are getting a world class learning facility that is going to create amazing opportunities for them.

“While we recognise a building alone does not make an effective learning community, resources do matter and the opportunities that come with those make a difference.”

From Balwearie, Perth and Morgan to Greenfield

Johnny was previously head teacher of another Dundee secondary, Morgan Academy. Before that he was rector of Perth Academy and depute head teacher of Balwearie High School, in Kirkcaldy.

He says: “I’ve been ambitious for every learning community I’ve led or served. This is no different.

“The people I speak to want the young people to feel safe, happy and to succeed.

“Our priority is to establish a really strong, welcoming, calm learning community where young people feel proud to come, want to come and can access high quality learning.

“And that’s it, that’s year one.”