



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

DECEMBER 2019

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

CLOSURE OF STRACHAN SCHOOL.

Consultation open 07/01/2020 to 28/02/2020

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL IS PROPOSING, SUBJECT TO THE OUTCOME OF THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION PROCESS:

- **To discontinue education at Strachan School, which is currently mothballed and re-assigning its catchment area to that of either Banchory Primary School and/or Finzean School**
- **The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in Strachan, as there is no pre-school education provided at the school.**
- **The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.**

This document has been issued by Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. The Act requires that changes to the school estate, including the proposed closure of a school, are subject to rigorous statutory consultation.

The schools affected by this proposal are:

Strachan School
Banchory Primary School
Durriss School
Finzean School
Hill of Banchory School

DISTRIBUTION

A copy of this document is available on the Aberdeenshire Council website: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/> or by emailing learningstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

This document will be provided to:

- Parent Councils of the schools listed above
- Parents of the pupils at the schools listed above
- Pupils at the schools listed above
- Parents of pre-school age children living within the Banchory Network
- Staff at the schools listed above
- Trade union representatives of the above staff
- Feughdee West Community Council, Finzean Community Council, Banchory Community Council and Crathes, Drumoak & Durriss Community Council
- Education Scotland
- Strachan residents

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Council HQ, Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB
- Banchory Library
- The schools listed above
- Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie

1. Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Strachan School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland Act 2010) and the Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the heightened consideration to be given to rural school closures.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all of the pupils in its schools.
- 2.2 This proposal document is focussed upon Strachan School, located within the Marr area of Aberdeenshire, and part of the Banchory school network.
- 2.3 This proposal document contains several maps. Pdf copies of all maps will be available on the Aberdeenshire Council website at the address given on page 2 of this document. Printed copies of the maps will also be available on request in each of the schools affected by the consultation, at Banchory Library and at Gordon House in Inverurie.
- 2.4 The consultation will run from Tuesday 7 January 2020 until Friday 28 February 2020. A public meeting will be held to discuss the proposal on Thursday 6 February 2020 in Strachan Village Hall at 7pm
- 2.5 The consultation process for this proposal is set out in detail in Section 22.

3. Reason for Proposal

- 3.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
 - No children have attended Strachan School since the end of session 2016/17, when the school was mothballed.
 - Despite engagement with the wider community, no parents have chosen to enrol their children at Strachan School for the 2017/18, 2018/19 or 2019/20 session.
 - Two families have indicated that they may be interested in sending their children to the school, when they reach school age, in future years, this would give a roll of fewer than five pupils. A school roll of this size provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence.
 - A school roll of fewer than five pupils hampers social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age.
 - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
 - All alternative uses of the school building require the official closure of the school in the first instance.

- 3.2 The current proposal follows informal discussions between Aberdeenshire Council officials; local elected members, the community council and community members. Informal meetings with the community were held as follows:
- Feughdee West Community Council (5 September 2018)
 - Community Engagement Session (26 September 2018)
 - Community Engagement Session (5 December 2018)
 - Community Engagement Session (1 May 2019)
- 3.3 Letters were sent to every property within the catchment area to inform residents of the meetings in December 2018 and May 2019, with contact details if they were unable to attend.
- 3.4 These meetings proved very useful and a number of suggestions were made over the course of the sessions for uses of the school building. These are detailed in the Options Appraisal at Appendix 1.

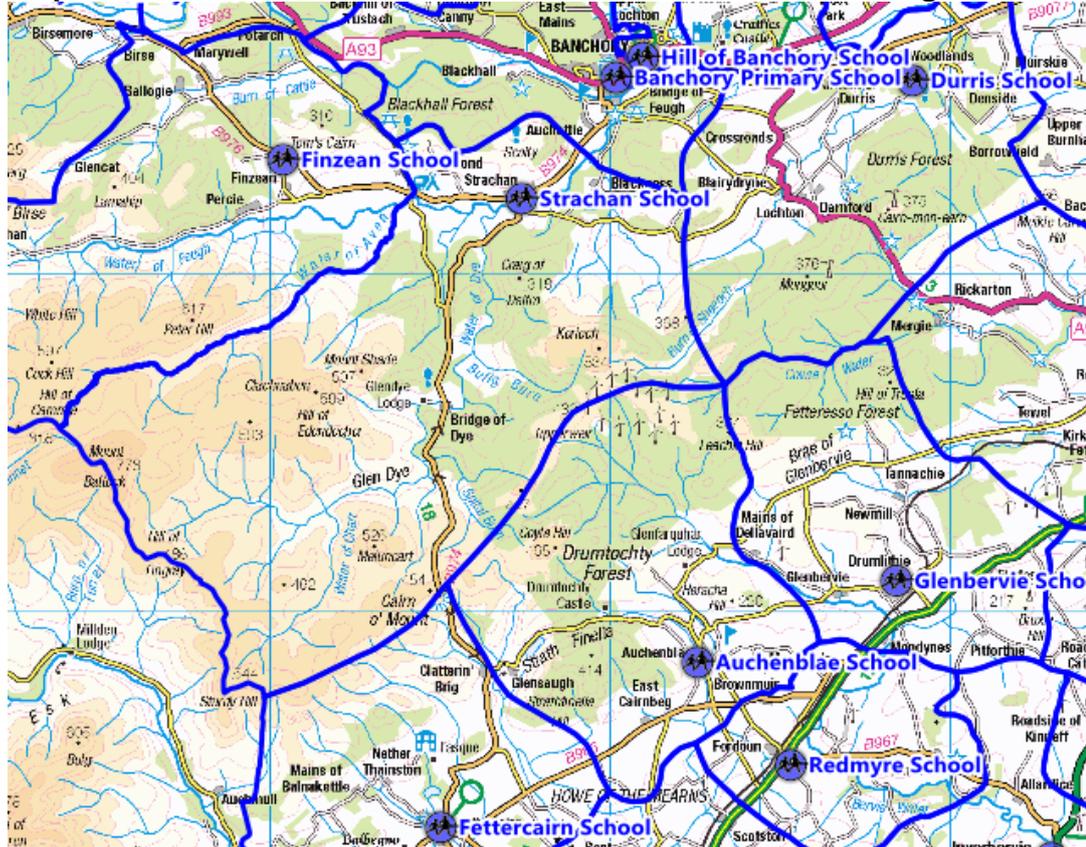
4. Examination of Alternatives

- 4.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure. The alternatives to closure would be:
- to re-open Strachan School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or;
 - to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.
- 4.2 During the community engagement sessions, officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure. These were assessed during the Options Appraisal. The suggestions included healthcare facilities, community café, daycare centres, out of school or early years provision and business premises.
- 4.3 At the meeting of 1 May 2019, the community were notified that any further alternatives to closure should be submitted by 14 June 2019.
- 4.4 Five further suggestions were received during this period, four relating to an after school club or childcare provision, and the other relating to the use of the building as a forest school or outdoor learning centre. These suggestions are included in the Options Appraisal. However, as none of them involve the building operating as a primary school for local pupils, they would not be a viable alternative to closure.
- 4.5 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required of the most appropriate way to re-zone the school catchment area. Further discussion of this is included for the Options in sections 10 to 13 below.
- 4.6 The detail of the Council’s consideration of the alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and the Options Appraisal.

5. Current Details – Strachan School

- 5.1 Strachan School is located in the village of the same name, close to the junction of the B974 from Banchory and B976 from Finzean. The catchment area stretches north to Scolty Hill, north-west to Whitestone, east to Mulloch Wood, and south to the Cairn o' Mount. The school is considered as Remote Rural based upon Scottish Government classifications. Map 1 below shows the catchment area and those of neighbouring schools. Appendix 3 shows the Strachan School catchment area in greater detail.

Map 1: Catchment area for Strachan School and surrounding schools



- 5.2 Strachan School has a capacity of 50 pupils. The accommodation at the school consists of two classrooms although one of these is in a linked temporary unit. There is also a shared admin and head teacher office, a staffroom and shared library/resource area. The dining room for the school is situated in an annexe building at the rear of the school grounds, up a steep incline that is not accessible for wheelchair use. School meals were prepared at Banchory Primary School and transported to Strachan daily.
- 5.3 The outside areas are a concrete playground to the front of the school containing playground equipment and a grassed area to the rear beside the annexe building. The school site is split to the rear by an access road to neighbouring properties, with the dining annexe and grassed area located on the opposite side of the road. PE was taken in the village hall, a 600m walk from the school.
- 5.4 The school has been mothballed since the end of session 2016/17 when the remaining pupil in the school transferred to Banchory Primary School.

5.5 The school delivered primary education from P1 to P7. There are no nursery facilities in the school, or elsewhere within the village. The school did not operate a breakfast club or after school club outwith school hours.

5.6 When the school was last in operation, it was managed with a dual head teacher arrangement with Finzean School. Were the school to re-open with one class of pupils, the staffing entitlements could be as follows;

Head Teacher – 1.00 FTE

Teacher (Head teacher relief) – 0.42 FTE

Class Contact Time Teacher – 0.11 FTE

Administrator and Admin Support Assistant – 20 hours per week

Senior Catering Assistant – 12.5 hours per week

Cleaner – 9 hours per week

This would be dependent upon actual roll and in line with the Aberdeenshire Teacher Staffing Standard.

5.7 In addition, ASN teaching and pupil support staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the Banchory Cluster.

5.8 Every local authority in Scotland is required to grade their schools for condition and suitability. The gradings range from A to D for each category with the following values:

A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently (85-100%)

B: Satisfactory – Performing adequately but with minor problems (60-85%)

C: Poor – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (40- 60%)

D: Bad – Does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (0-40%)

5.9 Strachan School is currently rated as “B” (66.36%) for educational suitability and “B” for building condition. The school had previously been graded as C for suitability, but the criteria have been updated nationally and all schools in Aberdeenshire were reassessed in Spring 2019.

5.10 There is no current Education Scotland Inspection report available for Strachan School.

5.11 If the school re-opened with all in zone pupils attending, then five of the current primary aged pupils would qualify for school transport due to their distance from the school.

6. Re-Opening of Strachan School with Current Catchment Area

6.1 There are currently 48 pupils of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school (September 2019). These children all attend other schools in the Marr Area, having submitted successful out of zone placing requests to attend other schools.

6.2 There are 22 new houses either allocated within the local development plan or with approved planning permission within the Strachan catchment area.

6.3 During the period that the school was operational, a significant proportion of

pupils attended other schools through out of zone placing request. Strachan School was previously mothballed in August 2015, and since reopening in November 2015 the roll has not exceeded five pupils.

- 6.4 The new housing can be expected to generate 9 primary aged pupils over a number of years. There are on average five potential P1 pupils each year for the next three years.
- 6.5 If the school were to re-open, any pupils enrolling would have shorter journey times to school than they do at present, as Banchory Primary School is 3.7 miles from Strachan School and Finzean School is 5 miles from Strachan School.
- 6.6 As previously stated in 3.1, the school has not been operational since July 2017. Aberdeenshire Council has sought enrolments into the school from either in zone, or out of zone pupils for both the 2018/19 session and the 2019/20 session. No applications were received, and only two families have indicated an interest in enrolling their children at the school in future years. It therefore appears unlikely at present that the school would reach a roll that would support learning and teaching.
- 6.7 Aberdeenshire Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching and make the re-opening of Strachan School unviable.

7. Re-Opening of Strachan School with Expanded Catchment Area

- 7.1 Consideration has also been given to extending the Strachan catchment area. The catchment area (Map 1 above) borders Banchory Primary School to the North, and Durriss School to the East, both schools within the Banchory network. Borders are also found with Finzean School to the West, which sits within the Aboyne Network, and Auchenblae School and Fettercairn School to the South, which sit within the Laurencekirk network.
- 7.2 When rezoning existing catchment areas, Aberdeenshire Council does not require pupils to move school, so the impact of any change in boundary line is likely to have minimal impact upon the number of pupils available to attend Strachan School.
- 7.3 Extending the catchment area to the south to incorporate part of the Auchenblae or Fettercairn zones would require pupils to travel over the Cairn O' Mount, which is regularly closed in bad weather. Pupils would have a greater distance to travel. The first inhabited properties within each catchment area are in excess of 11 miles from Strachan School, whilst the currently zoned school is fewer than five miles in distance
- 7.4 Any proposal to extend the Strachan catchment into the Finzean school catchment needs to take account of the fact that Finzean is itself a rural school with a declining roll, and limited pupil population.
- 7.5 Extending the catchment area into the current Durriss School catchment area, would have no impact upon the secondary school that pupils are currently zoned to. However, the area of the Durriss catchment that would be most appropriate to consider as an extension to Strachan School is scarcely

populated and would be unlikely to generate more than three additional pupils over a three year period.

7.6 The catchment area could be extended to the North into the Banchory Primary School catchment between Strachan and the River Dee. Any proposal would need to consider that whilst some properties are slightly nearer to Strachan than Banchory Primary School (0.25 mile difference), those with children of school age live closer to Banchory than they do to Strachan.

7.7 Any proposal to extend the Strachan catchment into another catchment area also needs to take account of the fact that Strachan School is not currently mothballed due to a lack of eligible children living within catchment, but rather as a result of parental choice.

8. Continuation of “Mothballing”

8.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement, Aberdeenshire Council does not consider that would represent the best option for the community or the taxpayer. “Mothballing” would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school. The Council would also be responsible for the costs of maintaining a “mothballed” building.

8.2 Scottish Government guidance relating to the mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation.

8.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing. New pupils either reaching school age or moving into zone, who attend the designated school would be entitled to free school transport.

8.4 Those pupils who chose out of zone placements to other schools whilst Strachan School was still operational are not currently entitled to free school transport, although a number are transported through privilege passes.

8.5 As the Strachan school building is not currently in use, a continuation of mothballing would have no impact on the community.

9. Details of Proposal

9.1 The council proposes that Strachan School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be with immediate effect from the completion of the consultation process. The council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils should continue their education at the schools they are currently attending. If the proposals are implemented any siblings of these current pupils would be able to join their brother/sister(s) at the same school.

9.2 The school catchment area would be reassigned to that of one of the neighbouring primary schools. Discussion of these options follows below.

Option 1 Close Strachan School and merge with Banchory Primary School

Option 2 Close Strachan School and merge with Finzean School

Option 3 Close Strachan School and divide catchment between Banchory Primary School and Finzean School

Discounted options and alternatives to closure

Option 4 Close Strachan School and merge with Hill of Banchory School

Option 5 Close Strachan School and merge with Durriss School

Alternative 1 Reopen Strachan School (see Sections 6 & 7)

Alternative 2 Continuation of Mothballing Strachan School (see Section 8)

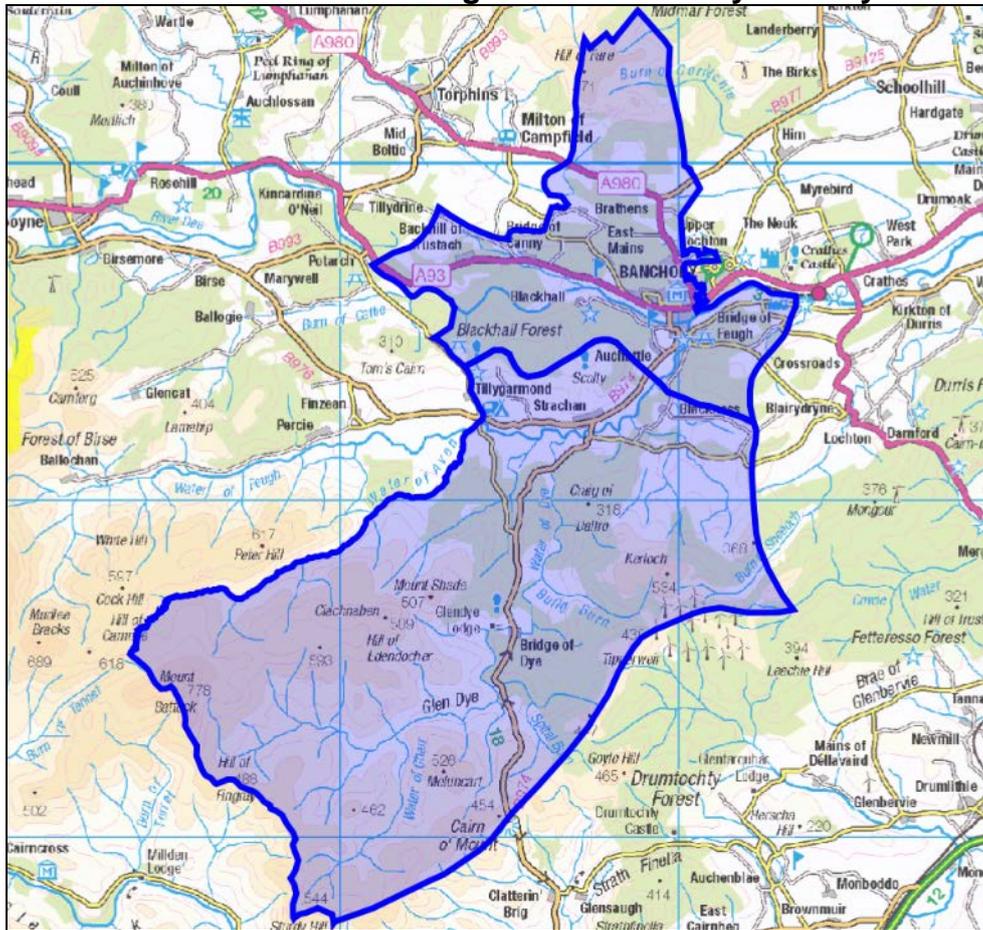
- 9.3 Alternative uses for the building, whilst not covered in this proposal document will be explored further with the community during the consultation period and beyond. Several potential uses have been suggested by the community and officers will support individuals or groups who wish to take them forward.
- 9.4 It is important that these proposals do not have a negative impact upon any children currently attending schools affected by this proposal and that they have continuity in their education.
- 9.5 The options identified above would have some impact upon the school rolls of the schools affected. The following table (Table 1) details the current roll and capacity of these schools over the next 5 years as per the Aberdeenshire Council School Roll Forecast, using the census taken in September 2019. The forecast is currently in draft format and will be considered by Education & Children’s Services Committee in January 2020. The draft can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website having been considered by Marr Area Committee in November 2019.
<http://committees.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/FunctionsPage.aspx?dsid=101832&action=GetFileFromDB>

Table 1 – Published School Roll Forecasts

School	Suitability Rating	Condition Rating	Capacity	Current Roll (Sept 19)	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Strachan School	B	B	50	0	5	8	14	18
Banchory Primary School	B	B	550	406	406	405	412	405
Durriss School	B	B	60	47	49	49	45	46
Finzean School	B	B	71	45	38	35	32	28
Hill of Banchory School	A	A	434	376	359	347	348	352

10. **Option 1 – Close Strachan School and merge with Banchory Primary School**
- 10.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown below in Map 2

MAP 2 – Strachan School merged with Banchory Primary School



- 10.2 Banchory Primary School is one of two primary schools located within the town of Banchory. It is situated 3.7 miles from Strachan School, and during the period of mothballing has been nominated as the designated school for pupils moving into the Strachan catchment area. The school is non-rural according to Scottish Government classifications.
- 10.3 The school offers both primary education from P1-7, and pre-school education. The school is also the Enhanced Provision Centre for the Banchory network, with adapted facilities for pupils with additional support needs. The accommodation consists of 19 classrooms for school age children and 2 for nursery, a school hall used for PE & school lunches, a kitchen, multiple general purpose rooms, libraries, sensory room, nurture room, staffroom, Head Teacher office, school office, and breakout areas. The outside areas consist of a large, well equipped tarmac playground, a good sized playing field and covered lockable bicycle storage.
- 10.4 The school has a capacity of 550 pupils and a current roll of 405 P1-7 pupils (September 2019). These are distributed across 17 classes. The school roll forecast to 2026 suggests pupil numbers will fluctuate slightly between 405 and 430 pupils. This represents a 75% use of capacity.

10.5 The year group numbers for the 2019/20 session are as follows:

Table 2 – Banchory Primary School Year Groups

P1 – 56	P2 - 53	P3 - 48	P4 -70
P5 – 57	P6 – 61	P7 - 60	

10.6 There are 52 children attending Banchory Primary School Nursery.

10.7 Each year a similar number of placing requests are received from families wanting to join Banchory Primary School and from families not wanting to attend the school. These average 7 requests to join and leave each year. 29 pupils from the Strachan catchment area attend Banchory Primary School.

10.8 Banchory Primary School is currently assessed as “B” (81.17%) for Suitability and “B” for Condition.

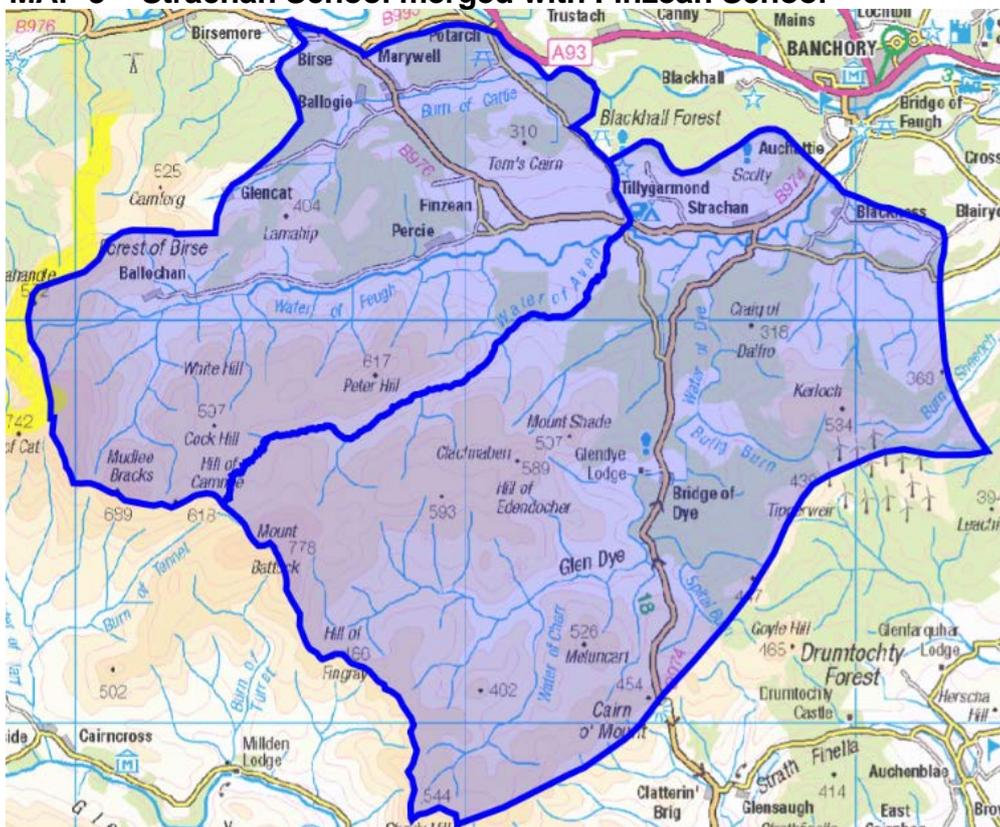
10.9 At present, 13 pupils from the Strachan catchment area are transported to Banchory Primary School via two school transport routes. This number could increase with the permanent closure of Strachan School, although the number of transport contracts would not be expected to rise.

10.10 As all pupils from the Strachan catchment area currently attend either Banchory Primary School, Finzean School, Crathes School or Hill of Banchory School, no adverse effects for Banchory Primary School are expected to arise with the permanent closure of Strachan School.

11. Option 2 – Close Strachan School and Merge with Finzean School

11.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is detailed in Map 3 below.

MAP 3 – Strachan School merged with Finzean School



- 11.2 Finzean School is located within the village of the same name. It is considered a remote rural school according to Scottish Government classification. It is located 5 miles from Strachan School. The school has three classrooms which the composite classes are taught from. The school also has a General Purpose room which is used for dining and as a PE hall; an office and a staffroom. School lunches are brought in from Kincardine O Neil School kitchen daily. The outside areas consist of a good sized playing field with a well equipped playground, picnic benches, bike storage and an external storage facility.
- 11.3 The school has a capacity of 71 pupils and a current roll of 45 P1-7 pupils (September 2019). The school roll forecast to 2026 predicts a falling roll to 22 pupils. This is currently a 70% use of capacity, dropping to 30% in 2026.
- 11.4 The school nursery managed as part of Finzean School is located offsite at Ballogie. There are currently 12 children attending Ballogie Nursery, a small number of whom would be zoned for Strachan School.
- 11.5 In recent years, on average there have been no placing requests for pupils wishing to join Finzean School, and one placing request for pupils to leave Finzean School.
- 11.6 Finzean School is currently assessed as “B” (73.5%) for Suitability and “B” for Condition.
- 11.7 The year group numbers for the 2019/20 session are as follows:

Table 3 – Finzean School Year Groups

P1 – 4	P2 – 2	P3 – 6	P4 – 8
P5 – 8	P6 – 7	P7 – 10	

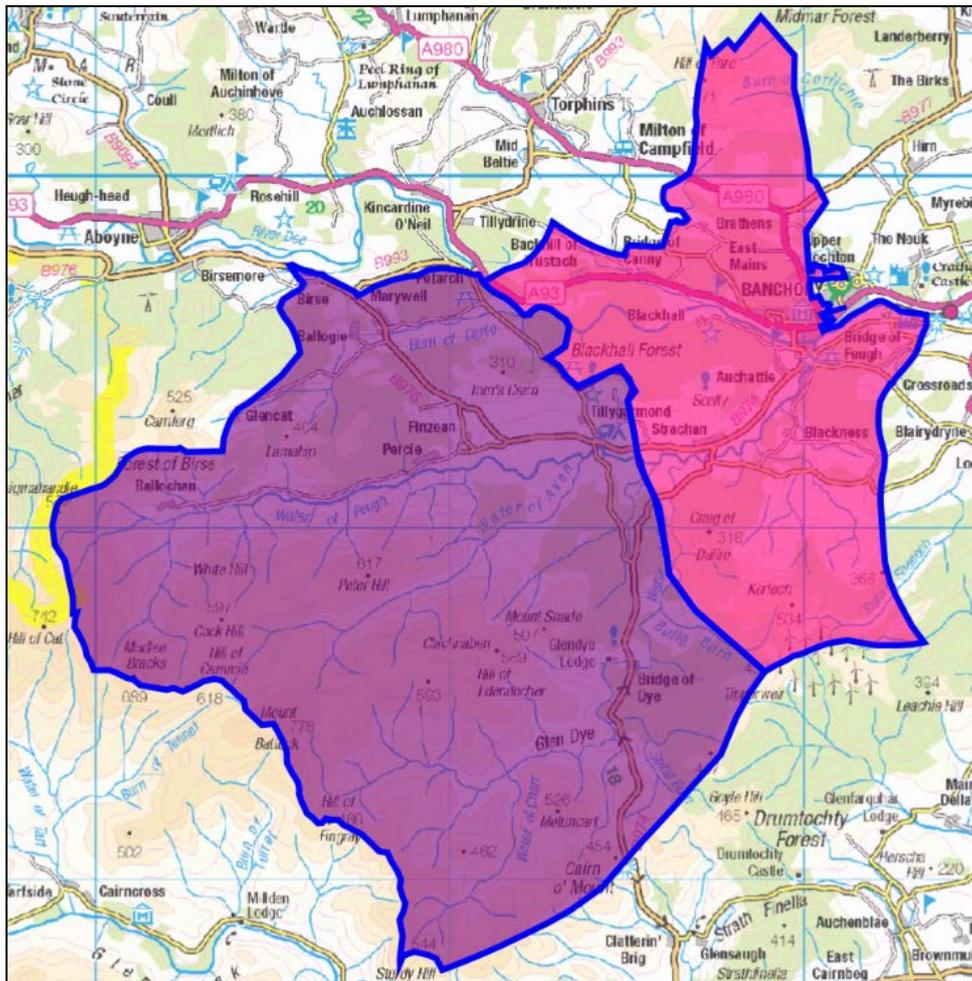
- 11.8 The class structure is a P1-3 cohort of 12 pupils, P4-5 class of 16 pupils and a P6-7 class of 17 pupils.
- 11.9 Five of the pupils from the Strachan catchment area currently attend Finzean School. There would be sufficient capacity at the school, should all children below school age in the Strachan catchment wish to attend Finzean School. However, Finzean sits within the Aboyne School network, and so if the Strachan catchment area were realigned to Finzean upon closure, pupils would then be travelling to Aboyne Academy in S1. This would be a distance of 12 miles, as opposed to the current journey to Banchory Academy which is around 4 miles, depending upon the pupils’ address within the catchment.

12. Option 3 – Close Strachan School and divide catchment between Banchory Primary School and Finzean School

- 12.1 Consideration should be given to dividing the catchment area between Banchory Primary School and Finzean School. This could reduce the journey time for any pupils living the north west corner of the current catchment area. Map 4 shows the divide that could deliver the shortest journey time for primary aged pupils between the two schools. As discussed in 11.9 above, this would involve pupils in the Finzean catchment area being zoned to Aboyne Academy, which would be a greater distance than to Banchory Academy.

12.2 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown below at Map 4.

MAP 4 – Strachan School Catchment divided between Banchory Primary School and Finzean School



13. Option 4 – Close Strachan School and merge with Hill of Banchory School

- 13.1 Hill of Banchory School is one of two primary schools located within the town of Banchory. It is situated 4.5 miles from Strachan School and is considered non-rural according to Scottish Government classification.
- 13.2 The school offers both primary education from P1-7, and pre-school education. The accommodation consists of 14 classrooms for school age children and two for nursery, a games hall used for PE a cafeteria for school lunches, a kitchen, multiple General Purpose Rooms, a library, staffroom, Head Teacher Office, School Office, and breakout areas. A community facility is joined to the school providing additional facilities. The outside areas consist of a well equipped playground, an all weather pitch, a good size tarmac area containing picnic benches and bike storage.
- 13.3 The school has a capacity of 434 pupils and a current roll of 376 P1-7 pupils (September 2019). These are distributed across 14 classes. This represents an 86% use of capacity. The school roll forecast to 2026 suggests a slightly declining roll, reducing to around 330. However, there are significant levels of housebuilding within the catchment area that are generating a higher number of school aged children than originally anticipated.

13.4 The year group numbers for the 2019/20 session are as follows:

Table 4 – Hill of Banchory School Year Groups

P1 – 53	P2 – 47	P3 – 55	P4 – 53
P5 – 47	P6 – 60	P7 – 61	

- 13.5 There are currently 70 children attending Hill of Banchory School Nursery.
- 13.6 Each year more placing requests to join Hill of Banchory School are received than for those wishing to attend a different school. These average an additional 5 pupils per year if all requests are accepted. 13 pupils from the Strachan catchment area currently attend Hill of Banchory School.
- 13.7 Hill of Banchory School is currently assessed as “A” (99.68%) for Suitability and “A” for Condition.
- 13.8 Whilst Hill of Banchory could be a viable option for merger with Strachan School, it has been discounted for two reasons. Firstly, the current house building adjacent to the school is generating more primary school aged pupils than originally expected, which puts pressure on class configuration and available teaching areas. Secondly, the Hill of Banchory catchment area does not align with the Strachan catchment area, and should the two schools be merged, pupils would travel through the Banchory Primary School catchment to reach Hill of Banchory School.

Option 5 – Close Strachan School and merge with Durriss School

- 14.1 Durriss School is located within the settlement of Woodlands of Durriss and also covers the communities of Kirkton of Durriss and Crossroads. It is an accessible rural school according to Scottish Government classification. The school has three classrooms which the two composite classes are taught from. The third classroom is currently used as a general purpose space. The school also has a dining room, an office and a staffroom. School lunches are brought in from Hill of Banchory School kitchen daily. There is no gym hall and so pupils travel to Drumoak School for PE lessons. The outside consists of a tarmac area with picnic benches and outdoor basketball nets.
- 14.2 The school has a capacity of 60 pupils and a current roll of 47 P1-7 pupils (September 2019). The school roll forecast to 2026 predicts a slight rise in pupils to 51, returning to current levels. At its peak this represents an 84% use of capacity.
- 14.3 The school nursery managed as part of Durriss School is located offsite at Crossroads. There are currently 24 children attending Crossroads Nursery, a small number of whom would be zoned for Strachan School.
- 14.4 In recent years, on average there have been no placing requests for pupils wishing to join Durriss School, and one placing request for pupils to leave Durriss School.
- 14.5 Durriss School is currently assessed as “B” (69.1%) for Suitability and “B” for Condition.

14.6 The year group numbers for the 2019/20 session are as follows:

Table 5 – Durriss School Year Groups

P1 – 9	P2 – 8	P3 – 4	P4 – 6
P5 – 8	P6 – 5	P7 – 7	

14.7 The class structure is a P1-3 cohort of 21 pupils a P4-5 class of 14 pupils and a P6-7 class of 12 pupils.

14.8 None of the pupils from the Strachan catchment area currently attend Durriss School. There would be insufficient capacity at the school, should all children below school age in the Strachan catchment wish to attend Durriss School.

15. Educational Benefit Statement

15.1 In 2009 the Scottish Government also set out its vision for the Future School Estate in Scotland, in 'Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future'.

15.2 In September 2019, this was up-dated with Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting People, Places and Learning', which was developed by Scottish Government and COSLA. This contains ten guiding principles. Local Authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate, namely:

- Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
- Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners;
- The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
- The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function;
- Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle;
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling and be digitally enabled;
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised;
- Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all;
- Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential;
- Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

- 15.3 In 2013 Aberdeenshire Council set minimum standards for the various elements of educational buildings to achieve optimal educational benefit, which were approved by committee:
- Accommodation should ensure delivery of the curriculum in accordance with modern standards and in particular; PE (2 hours minimum national standard); play spaces; social spaces; dining experience
 - Provision for pre-school and ante-pre-schools
 - Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs
 - Full compliance with the Equalities Act 2012
 - Provision of on-site playing fields
 - Provision of on-site car and bus parking and turning areas, with good segregation of pedestrians and vehicles
 - Provision of accommodation for non-teaching staff and for non-class contact elements of the work of teaching staff
- 15.4 In October 2018 the ECS Committee approved a Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate for Aberdeenshire Primary Schools.
- 15.5 If Strachan School were to reopen, with a reduced number of pupils over a greater age range, there would be increased challenges in ensuring that all children develop the four capacities of Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors.
- 15.6 Educational benefits are considered below for pupils if either Option 1, 2 or 3 is adopted.
- 15.7 Pupils at both Banchory and Finzean Primary Schools regularly work in co-operative learning groups. Cooperative learning strategy normally involves 4 pupils of roughly the same age group working together collaboratively. A roll of 4-5, such as that if Strachan School re-opened, would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static, since there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. The pupils may not be of a similar age and could be spread across P1 to P7. A roll of 4-5 would further limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.
- 15.8 The proposal would also provide improved opportunities for children to develop skills for learning, life and work e.g. increasing opportunities for working with others of a similar age and stage which are very limited in schools of less than 5 children in a multi-composite setting.
- 15.9 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Strategy, the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills. Pupils at Banchory Primary School and Finzean School have opportunities to engage with employers through workplace visits, career talks, employability events and courses and curriculum based activities and to learn about further and higher education and different career pathways into employment. Such knowledge and understanding

and skills acquisition would very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage.

- 15.10 At Banchory Primary pupils participate in a range of pupil groups. During the 2018/19 session every pupil was involved in at least one group. These include the Pupil Council, House Captains, Rights Respecting Schools Group, a school Eco-Committee, Young Leaders, Digital Leaders, Shanghai Maths Leaders, a Librarian Group developing a digital library, a buddy system and playground leaders.
- 15.11 Finzean School currently offers pupils the opportunity to be on the Pupil Quality of Learning and Teaching Committee, and the groups are planned for an Eco Committee, a Rights Respecting School Committee, Junior Road Safety Officers and an Enterprise Group.
- 15.12 Banchory Primary School has been gifted a site at Leys of Lochton. Finzean School has Finzean School Woods, situated half a mile from the school. These are both excellent outdoor learning spaces for pupils to access.
- 15.13 As Banchory Primary School is the Enhanced Provision Centre for the Banchory network, pupils benefit from access to wider facilities to support their needs. The school has a sensory room, a life skills area, nurture space. Quiet spaces for focussed work or one to one support. Good links are also in place with SALT (Speech and Language Therapy), Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and the Community Nurse.
- 15.14 Language learning is by nature a highly interactive activity involving, for example, participatory games, pupils speaking to one another and whole class Q and A sessions. Banchory Primary School and Finzean School fully support the 1+2 Approach to Language where the first foreign language is French, and the second is Spanish. In addition, Banchory Primary School recognises the home languages of pupils, with units provided across the year in a range of languages. Pupils are also learning Makaton. Delivery of language learning would be very constrained within the context of a school roll of 4 or 5.
- 15.15 A total school roll of 5 pupils or fewer severely restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing of experiences. At Banchory Primary School a different sporting activity is available most lunchtimes and after school. Sessions are run in yoga, fencing, rugby, football, basketball and netball. Additionally parental support allows pupils to participate in national competitions in swimming and skiing, as well as a range of local sporting activities.
- 15.16 Banchory Primary School offers a broad range of learning experiences and an inclusive learning environment where powerful learning is being achieved through high quality teaching. Through sharing of high expectations for all pupils and by inspiring a positive growth mindset towards challenge, the school is a place where successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals are able to grow.
- 15.17 As with sports, the larger rolls at Banchory and Finzean provide a greater

likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. Banchory Primary School has 'Drum Buddies', and an active choir. The parent council are intending to purchase ukuleles for the school. Instrumental Tuition is available in both schools from P4 onwards.

- 15.18 The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.
- 15.19 Pupils at Banchory Primary School benefit from access to an After School Club and Breakfast Club.
- 15.20 Some of the educational benefits arise not just from larger pupil numbers (e.g. to form teams of similar age and size), but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of interested adults leading a range of activities.
- 15.21 Both Banchory Primary School and Finzean School have an active Parent Council who meet every term and support the school and nursery with school improvements and fundraising. They actively seek to represent the views of the parent forum and to keep the forum updated with information. All parents are welcome to attend Parent Council Meetings. If Strachan School were to re-open there would be an opportunity for a Parent Council to operate, however with a small pupil cohort there would be a smaller number of families to participate resulting on a greater reliance on individuals to support the school.
- 15.22 Other activities such as World Book Day and Book Fairs organised by Scholastic Groups, would be limited in impact within the context of a school roll of 4 or 5.
- 15.23 Banchory Primary School has developed strong links with the local community, with intergenerational projects running with Dalvenie Lodge, and opportunities for art experiences through Woodend Barn.
- 15.24 Banchory Primary School runs an annual trip for P7 pupils to Dalguise. If Strachan School reopened, any trips would need to be run in conjunction with other local schools in order to be viable.
- 15.25 It is Aberdeenshire Council's view that the pupils from the Strachan catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at the larger neighbouring schools. Formalising the current arrangements would provide a number of such benefits, judged against both the Aberdeenshire and National criteria set out above.
- 15.26 As all pupils from the Strachan catchment currently attend Banchory Primary School, Hill of Banchory School, Crathes School or Finzean School, no adverse effects for those pupils are expected to arise from the permanent closure of Strachan School.

16. Effect on the local community

- 16.1 There is an existing village hall in Strachan which provides a public space for the local community. It is a fully accessible building with kitchen facilities, accessible toilets and a limited amount of dedicated parking. Recently funding has been acquired to refurbish and enhance the hall to the benefit of the local community.
- 16.2 The school building in Strachan has not operated as a community facility during times of being operational as a school, or during the periods of mothballing.
- 16.3 The Options Appraisal process has identified a number of alternative uses for the school, and Aberdeenshire Council would be keen to work with the local community to see whether at least part of the current school building could be turned over to community use. Any such proposal would however have to be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management policy.
- 16.4 Discussions with some members of the community have highlighted that the community hall is underutilised, and there are concerns that the activities of the Strachan community would not be able support a second community facility within the village.
- 16.5 Banchory Primary School has established links with Knockburn Loch, a local outdoor activity centre within the Strachan catchment area.

17. School Transport

- 17.1 Of the 48 pupils currently living within the Strachan catchment area, school transport is provided for 13 of them to Banchory Primary School. The other pupils either enrolled at Banchory Primary School as out of zone pupils prior to mothballing, or have enrolled at another out of zone school.
- 17.2 The closure of Strachan School would not impact upon the journey times for pupils, as they are currently being transported to other schools. However, the additional travel time compared to travelling to/from Strachan School to either Banchory Primary School or Finzean School is around 10 minutes in normal conditions.
- 17.3 During the last full school session (2018-19) there were no days on which Banchory Primary School, Durriss School or Finzean School did not operate due to bad weather. During the 2017-18 session there were 2 days in which Banchory Primary School was closed due to bad weather, and 3 days in which Durriss and Finzean Schools were closed over the same period. Given the rural nature of Strachan School it is likely that it would also have been closed on the days in question.
- 17.4 Based on current prices and 190 days in the school year, the annual cost is £42,180 to transport pupils to Banchory Primary School. This cost could increase to around £57,000 if a larger vehicle was required for all 48 pupils from across the Strachan area.
- 17.5 It is recognised that the larger merged school implies an increase in the number of pupils entitled to school transport compared to the number who can currently walk/cycle to school, should they choose to do so, and

the occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to/from school during the school day, should they require to do so.

- 17.6 Analysis has been carried out to identify the additional emissions of greenhouse gases arising from the current transport arrangements for Strachan pupils attending Banchory Primary School, Hill of Banchory School and Finzean School. The figures are based on an assumption that each family is transporting their own children to school and an average CO₂ emission has been calculated. Those being transported by bus to Banchory Primary School have been calculated at a bus emission rate.
- 17.7 This analysis estimates that the mothballing, and by extension the formal closure of, Strachan School, has resulted in just over 28.5 tonnes per annum of CO₂ equivalent emissions. The figures are estimates as emissions are affected by the speed at which vehicles are driven and the type of road travelled.
- 17.8 In the event of closure, all pupils within the Strachan catchment area would be entitled to school transport. This would see a reduction in emissions of around 10 tonnes if all pupils attending Banchory Primary School accessed school transport and around 18 tonnes if all Strachan pupils were transported.
- 17.9 The annual CO₂ equivalent emissions from the provision of transport should be set against the approximate annual emissions of 20 tonnes from the Strachan School buildings (see 19.1 below), which would be saved in the event of closure.

18. Financial Implications

- 18.1 As mentioned in 17.4 above the proposed changes could result in an increase in costs for School Transport provision, which would need to be met by Aberdeenshire Council.
- 18.2 Further details of the financial impact of this proposal are included in the financial template provided at Appendix 2. The costs provided in the template are from the 2016/17 when the school was last operational.

19. Sustainability

- 19.1 The Carbon Dioxide emissions for all schools considered in this proposal document are detailed in Table 7. The permanent closure of Strachan School would result in a reduction of around 20 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually and would not increase the emissions at any of the other schools. Transport emissions have been discussed above at section 17.

Table 6 – Annual CO₂ Emissions

School	Annual CO ₂ Emissions	Impacted by permanent closure of Strachan School?
Strachan School	20 Tonnes (2017)	Yes
Banchory Primary School	126 Tonnes	No
Finzean School	24 Tonnes	No
Hill of Banchory School (including Community Wing)	174 Tonnes	No
Durris School	17 Tonnes	No

19.2 Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced by many rural authorities in Scotland. Rural schools with small numbers of pupils on roll changes the teaching dynamic, requiring teachers to be highly adept in managing the curriculum, differentiation and assessment for pupils from primary 1 - 7 in one or just two classes to ensure an educational benefit is maintained. Due to the staffing complement within these establishments the opportunities for collegiate and stage partner working requires carefully planning with local schools and increased use of digital resources to allow online communities, however some rural settings also have connectivity difficulties.

20. Implications for staff

20.1 As the school is already “mothballed” there will be no impact on staffing arrangements at Banchory Primary School, Finzean School, Hill of Banchory School or Durriss School from a formal closure of Strachan School.

20.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements. All staff previously based at Strachan School are either employed at other establishments or have resigned from their posts within Aberdeenshire Council.

20.3 The staffing implications of re-opening Strachan School are set out at 5.6 above, whilst the financial implications are set out in **Appendix 2**.

20.4 The current staffing allocation with Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for each school is set out in the table below.

Table 7 – Staffing Levels for each school

Position	Strachan School (if reopened)	Banchory Primary School	Finzean School	Hill of Banchory School	Durriss School
Head Teacher	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE
Depute Head		2 FTE		2 FTE	
Class Contact Time / HT Relief Teacher	0.53 FTE	2.74 FTE	0.88 FTE	1 FTE	0.77 FTE
Teachers		13 FTE	2 FTE	13.3 FTE	1 FTE
Administrator & Admin Support Assistant	0.57 FTE	2 FTE	0.67 FTE	1.44 FTE	0.77 FTE
Early Years Lead Practitioner		2 FTE	0.55 FTE	2 FTE	0.55 FTE
Early Years Practitioner		5.5 FTE	0.55 FTE	4.67 FTE	0.55 FTE
Catering Unit Supervisor		1 FTE		1 FTE	
Senior Catering Assistant	0.35 FTE		0.43 FTE		0.35 FTE
Assistant Cook		0.95 FTE		0.71 FTE	
Catering Assistants		2.07 FTE		2.06 FTE	
Cleaner	0.25 FTE	2.63 FTE*	0.37 FTE	3.4 FTE**	0.28 FTE

* includes the time allocated for Site Supervisor

** includes time for cleaning the community and nursery wing

20.5 ASN teaching and pupil support staff are allocated to each school in

accordance with an annual assessment of need across the cluster.

- 20.6 Trade Unions are included in the consultation process. Any impacts for staff will be addressed under existing HR policies.

21 Equal Opportunities

21.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a statutory requirement on the Council to assess the policies and practices necessary to meet the requirements of anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. It also affords an opportunity for the Council to consider the impact on the education service. An assessment has been carried out, as part of the options appraisal process.

21.2 The aim of an EIA is to examine policies and practice in a structured way to make sure that adverse effects on groups with protected characteristics are avoided. It is also a tool to enable the Council to assess what positive steps it can take to promote equality of opportunity and measure the results of the actions that have been taken.

21.3 The main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from Strachan to Banchory or Finzean, however as the school has been mothballed since July 2017, all the current pupils are already making this journey to either school.

21.4 Funded school transport would be provided for all P1-7 pupils attending either Banchory Primary School or Finzean School from the current Strachan catchment area, if one of those options is approved.

21.5 Although funded transport is not provided for nursery age children, these children have already been attending either pre-school settings in either Banchory, Finzean or Durriss. The journey times involved are not lengthy in comparison to those faced by many other primary and nursery age children in Aberdeenshire.

21.6 As part of the consultation process the Council will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers and young people, and will address comments about equality during this consultation.

21.7 Under The Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Existing arrangements in place for pupils within the schools affected with additional support needs will continue. Strachan School is not currently accessible as discussed at 10.3 above. Banchory Primary School is the enhanced provision hub for the Banchory Network, and as such is fully adapted to meet the requirements of pupils with a range of additional support needs.

22 Consultation Arrangements

22.1 At its meeting on 5 December 2019, Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee were asked to agree that a proposal document should be issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in the paper until after the

end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.

- 22.2 A copy of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed on the first page of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/>
- 22.3 The period for consultation will extend from Tuesday 7 January 2020 until Friday 28 February 2020 which covers a minimum period of 30 school days.
- 22.4 A public meeting will be held on Thursday 6 February 2020 at Strachan Village Hall at 7pm. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting is welcome. The meeting will be convened by the Council and the Council will present the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions and comment. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.
- 22.5 Meetings will be organised for the staff working in each affected primary school during January 2020 to discuss the proposals, and a number of opportunities will be arranged for all primary pupils within the affected schools to engage in the consultation in a manner appropriate to their age.
- 22.6 An online survey will be available as part of the consultation. This can be completed at the following address:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/StrachanConsultation>
- 22.7 The Council will also consider all written comments which should be sent to Maxine Booth, Quality Improvement Manager, to be received no later than 5pm on Friday 28 February 2020. They should be posted to Aberdeenshire Council, Education & Children's Services, Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA or emailed to learningstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
- 22.8 A copy of this document will also be sent to Education Scotland. They will also receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council during the consultation period. They will be provided with a copy of any oral representations made at the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, they may visit the school and make such reasonable enquiries as they consider appropriate.

23. Consideration of Consultation Responses

- 23.1 The Council will review the proposals having regard to the Education Scotland Report, survey results, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a report on the consultation. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats. It will be available on the Council website and from Council Headquarters, as well as at the schools, libraries and offices listed on page 2 of this document, free of charge. Anyone making written representations during the consultation period will be informed about the report.

- 23.2 The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations and a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting. The report will also include the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report, a response to issues raised through any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled. The report will also contain a statement explaining how the Council has complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the Education Scotland Report and representations (both written and oral) that it received.
- 23.3 The last section of the report will include an officer recommendation as to whether the proposals should be adopted and implemented. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to the Council making a decision.
- 23.4 A final decision is likely to be made by the council on the proposed changes by November 2020.

24. Decision Making

- 24.1 The consultation report will be considered firstly by the Marr Area Committee who will be asked to make a comment on the officer recommendation.
- 24.2 Following the Marr Area Committee, the ECS Committee will be asked to make a recommendation as to whether the proposed changes are implemented. This is expected to be in August 2020.
- 24.3 Following discussion and recommendation at both the Marr Area Committee and the ECS Committee, Full Council will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report. This is expected to be by November 2020.

25. Conclusion

- 25.1 Taking the above into account Aberdeenshire Council recommends that Strachan School, currently "mothballed," is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of either Banchory Primary School, Finzean School or a combination of the two, as outlined in Options 1-3 above.
- 25.2 Whichever decision is taken with respect to catchment areas, existing pupils will not be required to change schools. This will also apply to any younger siblings of such pupils, provided they remain at the same primary school.
- 25.3 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements.



From mountain to sea

Strachan School

Introduction

On 17 May 2018 the Education and Children's Services Committee approved the preparation of an Options Appraisal on the future of Strachan School and supported community engagement as part of the Options Appraisal process to identify alternative options to consider.

Background / Discussion

Strachan School is a single storey, two classroom school located in the village of Strachan, 4 miles from Banchory. The school has a capacity of 50 pupils, although one of the two classrooms is in a linked temporary unit. The dining room for the school is situated in an annexe building at the rear of the school grounds, up a steep incline that is not accessible for wheelchair use.

Strachan School has been mothballed throughout the 2017/18 session and the 2018/19 session to date. Mothballing is the temporary closure of a school which does not in itself lead to statutory consultation. Reference is made to the report considered by Education & Children's Services on 31 August 2017.

In June 2017, the decision was made to mothball the school for the second time due to a decline in pupil numbers. Towards the end of the 2016/17 session it became clear that the roll of the school would fall to zero pupils. This was due to older pupils moving to secondary school, and out of zone placing requests to other local schools. The decision was made that mothballing the school was necessary. The school had previously been mothballed in 2015.

Community Engagement

The Learning Estates Team met with the community for the following engagements in order to fully inform and explore potential options for the future of Strachan School.

- 5 September 2018 – Meeting with Feughdee West Community Council to outline plans for engagement
- 26 September 2018 – Community Engagement Session at Strachan School to discuss potential options.
- 5 December 2018 – Community Engagement Session at Strachan School to further explore options

A full list of suggestions / comments can be found in Appendix 1 with an overview of what would be required for the suggestion to be implemented.



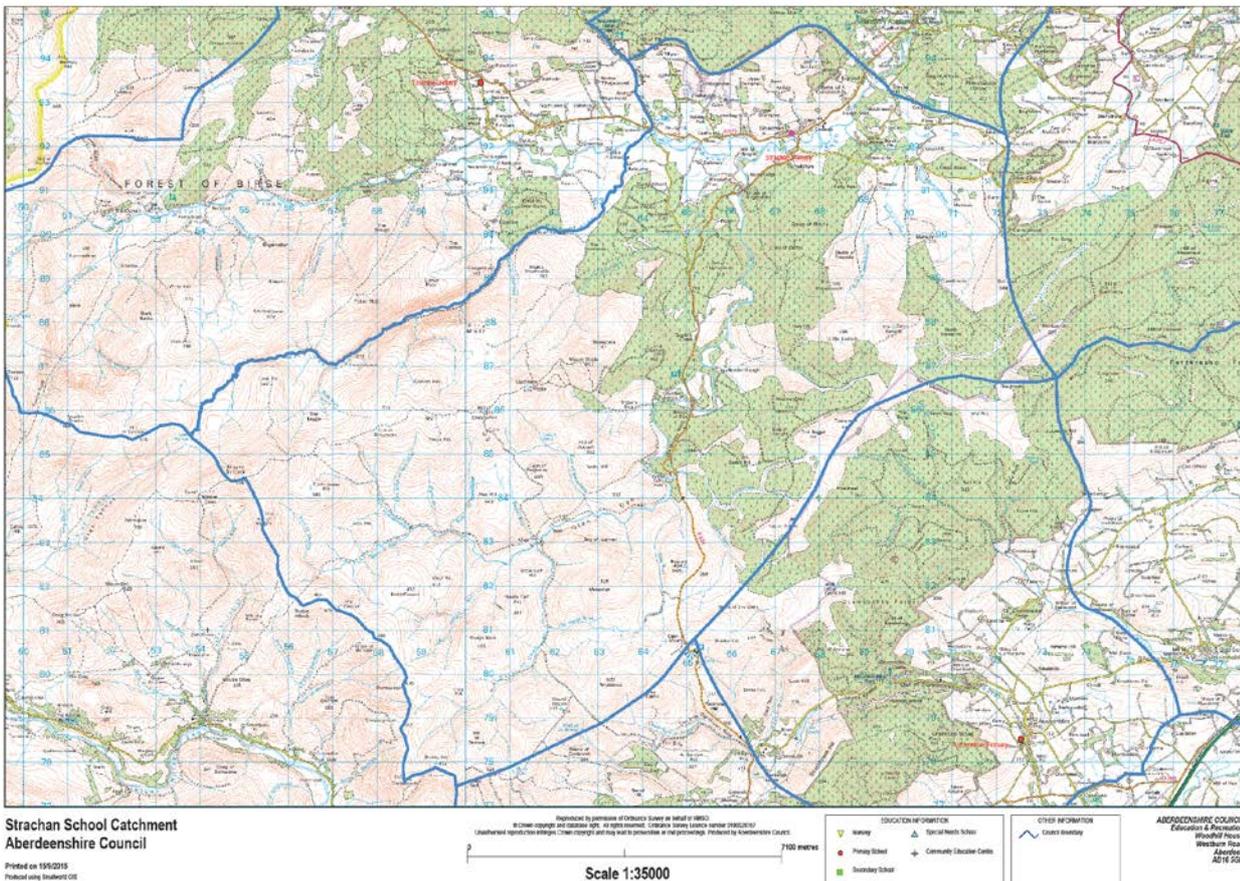
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Options Appraisal

An options appraisal has been undertaken to consider the future of Strachan School. The appraisal considered the current mothballing and the pattern of local pupils choosing to attend other Primary schools in the area.

Strachan and Local Area

Strachan School is a remote rural school which is part of the Banchory Cluster of schools in Aberdeenshire. The catchment area for the school is shown in the map below.



Housing Development

M/ST/H/007 Steading at Bowbutts Farm 7 units under construction with 4 expected for completion in 2019, and the remaining 3 units expected in later years.

M/ST/H/008 Gateside Farm 15 units Full Planning Permission to be built 2020 – 2023)

Demographics and Pupil Numbers

From mountain to sea

The catchment area for Strachan currently has 45 children that are enrolled at Primary school with Aberdeenshire Council (SEEMIS). Due to out of zone placing requests these children attend different schools within the network.

Current School	Count
Banchory Primary School	29
Finzean Primary School	5
Hill of Banchory School	11

The below table shows the current spread of stages the catchment zone has

Year / Stage	Count
P1	3
P2	2
P3	6
P4	8
P5	8
P6	12
P7	6

According to the NHS CHI data there are four children within the catchment area that could have enrolled for P1 in August 2019 but officers understand that they have been enrolled at other schools.

Suitability and Condition

Strachan School was assessed on 17 May 2011 and the Overall Condition Rating for the Property was **B**, satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration.

The Suitability assessment of Strachan School which took place on 25 April 2017 graded the School as **C**, poor – showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (the school building and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the School). Issues raised within this assessment were:

- The school has no internal facilities for PE. A footpath had been formed from the school to the village hall so pupils could walk to the hall for PE
- The playground is generally unsuitable for outdoor PE
- Security issues highlighted due to lack of reception area

Pupil Enrolments

From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Council wrote to every property within the catchment area to inform them that applications would be considered at the school for the 2019/20 session, and this information was shared in press releases and on social media.

No families have approached Aberdeenshire Council to enroll their children at the school, either as a new P1 start or as a placing request. Additionally, no families have approached officers to indicate that if there were sufficient other families in a similar position that they would consider moving their children back to the school.

Options for Consideration

Several of the comments proposed that the school reopen. However, that requires families wishing to send their children to the school.

As no new pupil enrolments have been received, the option for re-opening the school for the 2019-20 session is not viable. On this basis the school will continue to be mothballed for the 2019/20 session.

A number of alternative suggestions for the school building have been suggested, some are educational / community based, whilst others would involve commitment from other agencies or private companies. These cannot be implemented or trialed without the formal closure of the school.

- 1- Reopen the school – No pupils have enrolled, therefore discounted at this stage.
- 2- Continue Status Quo – School remains mothballed for a further session and potentially beyond.
- 3- Consider Closing School and rezoning pupils to attend another school in the Banchory network

Legislation

One of the options identified as part of the appraisal is to close the school. This is currently considered to be the only viable option for the school, and therefore Aberdeenshire Council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a rural school there is a presumption against closure and Aberdeenshire Council must ensure all other alternatives have been identified and robustly considered prior to undertaking any statutory consultation on this matter.

Aberdeenshire Council would welcome any further options, that would be an alternative to closure for consideration. These must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 14 June 2019. These should be sent in writing to either learningstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or to Learning Estates Team, Gordon House, Inverurie, AB51 3WA

Appendix 1 - Comments and Suggestions

Ref. No.	Comment/Suggestion	Wants	Requirement for implementation
1	Ideally, I would like to see our community once again have it's own school, perhaps with wraparound care for working parents. Failing that, a community asset would be a big bonus to the village. Maybe a combination of a community-run shop, a free library, a cafe and any other services people would enjoy. I feel the council must communicate effectively with the village's needs & desired. We benefit from few services compared to those living in towns but unless one wants a totally empty countryside, some benefit must accrue to country-dwellers.	1. School 2. Community run facility	1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School 2. School Closure Process - Community Commitment
2	First choice would be a school with a joined multi-use space. This space would be bookable by external groups or by other key services (pop-up GP/bank/post office) A base for after schools clubs or youth cultural activities would also allow the community to engage with the space. If this was done during the consultation process the community would see the building positively & re-engage with it.	1. School / Community Space 2. After School club	1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School 2. School Closure Process - Involvement of Private After School Provider or Community Commitment
3	If unable to open as a school, become a nursery. However open the school again-advertise it, promote it (I went to a single classroom rural school. It was like a family.) Use as a community asset - nursery/library/breakfast (after-school club - holiday activities.) Community shop/pub	1. School 2. Nursery 3. Community Asset	1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School. 2. School Closure Process - Involvement of Private Nursery Provider 3. School Closure Process - Community Commitment
4	Hospital	1. Hospital	1. School Closure Process - NHS Involvement and Commitment
5	Being relatively new to Strachan community, I am perhaps a little 'green' regards to the needs of Strachan. However, I do value the spirit of a rural school myself. Hopefully the area can be canvassed effectively and trust built up to give parents a feel for what could be. However if a school is not viable, then I would hope there would be interest in the building being put to good use by the community...either for nursery, an elderly drop in, a cafe & information base for local walks & cycle trails. Or a community market with a community	1. School 2. Community run facility	1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School 2. School Closure Process - Community Commitment

	fridge (with honesty box)...a library...or an area where craft classes could be on offer.		
6	Outdoor/Indoor education - children-nursery upwards. Maybe mental health facility? Using access to countryside eg Scolty etc... Lifelong learning availability? Youngsters and older population.	1. Alternative Education Provision	1. School Closure Process -possible NHS Involvement and Commitment, further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council
7	All too late- parents won't change their mind now. This school is costing money left mothballed. There are a lack of teachers, so close the school. A bus would be more beneficial for us Strachan Parent's. Too many cars in and out the road while the school is mothballed. Make it a community facility.	1. Community facility	1. School Closure Process - Community Commitment
8	Given the overcrowding of the Banchory GP surgery I think it would be beneficial to both Banchory and Strachan for the school to be converted into a new GP surgery.	1. Doctor's Surgery	1. School Closure Process - NHS Involvement and Commitment
9	Would be great if it could stay as a school but if not; would be keen to turn the school into a business area for many people who work from home. To give them the option of meeting rooms or a business hub where they can work and have access to wifi. Could employ part time receptionist which gives the self employed a bit more professional options.	1. School 2. Business Hub	1. School Closure Process - Private Business Commitment
10	Other uses ideas -Social enterprise centre for adults with learning difficulties -Daycare centre/ meeting place for elderly/ dementia patients. -Sheltered housing	1. Daycentre	1. School Closure Process -possible NHS Involvement and Commitment or further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council

<p>11</p>	<p>Forest School/Outdoor education centre for Aberdeenshire Schools. Assets; Ind. Wildlife garden, Footpath into blackhill forest/scotty hill starts at the school, school buildings as base with minimal adaptation necessary.</p>	<p>1. Forest School</p>	<p>1. School Closure Process -further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>It should be a school first & foremost. But if there aren't enough children a nursery, café, or community space, book exchange.</p>	<p>1. School 2. Nursery 3. Café 4. Community Space</p>	<p>1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School. 2. School Closure Process - Involvement of Private Nursery Provider 3 & 4. School Closure Process - Community Commitment</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>If cannot be substantiated as a going concern as a school, suggest though is given to using as a community centre/café.</p>	<p>1. School 2. Community run facility</p>	<p>1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School 2. School Closure Process - Community Commitment</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Outdoor education using the huge wild garden.</p>	<p>1. Outdoor education</p>	<p>1. School Closure Process -further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Dementia day care tagged on with nursery provision as there has been lots of research to say that there are huge benefits for both age groups/when combined.</p>	<p>1. Nursery/Daycentre</p>	<p>1. School Closure Process -possible NHS Involvement and Commitment or further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council. Involvement of Private Nursery Provider</p>

16	Nursery provision combined with day care for dementia clients. Parking!	1. Nursery/Daycentre	1. School Closure Process -possible NHS Involvement and Commitment or further engagement with other sectors within Aberdeenshire Council. Involvement of Private Nursery Provider
17	Since Strachan School is closed/Mothballed school transport should be laid on for Primary kids as the number of cars driving in form Banchory (enviromental/ safety impact) We don't need another community building as Strachan Hall is not utilised enough. Sell the Building and put money towards education in Banchory. Listen to parents of school age kids-not just the residents who have no children. Speed up the process.	1. Sale of building	1. School closure process
18	Banchory Academy & Banchory Primary are in desperate need of help. Raise the funds by selling the Asset and put it to where it is needed. Also there is so many children in the area needing transport.	1. Sale of building	1. School closure process
19	To remain a viable school for the community-and to be proactively promoted by council.	1. School	1. Sufficient Pupils to reopen School
20	A craft and art club for kids and adults and I think it is a good opportunity to make new friends.	1. Craft/Art club	1. School Closure Process - Community Commitment

Appendix 2 - Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure					
Row 2	Name of School	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school [Banchory Primary School or Finzean School]	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)		
Row 2	Strachan School					
Row 3	School costs					
Row 4	<i>Employee costs - note 1</i>					
Row 5	teaching staff	97,400.00		97,400.00		
Row 6	non-teaching staff	36,200.00		36,200.00		
Row 7	teaching training (CPD etc)	500.00		500.00		
Row 8	Non-teaching training					
Row 9	Supply costs - note 2	1,300.00		1,300.00		
Row 10	Building costs:					
Row 11	property insurance	1,000.00	not available on an e	1,000.00		
Row 12	non domestic rates	0.00	100% Rural relief			
Row 13	water & sewerage rates	1,100.00		1,100.00		
Row 14	electricity	2,100.00		2,100.00		
Row 15	gas					
Row 16	heating oil	2,300.00		2,300.00		
Row 17	biomass					
Row 18	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	4,600.00		4,600.00		
Row 19	security costs					
Row 20	building repair & maintenance					
Row 21	grounds maintenance	2,300.00		2,300.00		
Row 22	facilities management costs					
Row 23	other	9,900.00		9,900.00		
Row 24						
Row 25						
Row 26	<i>School operational costs:</i>					
Row 27	learning materials	3,800.00		3,800.00		
Row 28	catering (contract or inhouse)	6,000.00		6,000.00		
Row 29	SQA costs					
Row 30	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	2,600.00		2,600.00		
Row 31						
Row 32	<i>Transport costs: note 3</i>					
Row 33	home to school	42,180.00	57,000.00	-14,820.00		
Row 34	other pupil transport costs	500.00		500.00		
Row 35	staff travel					
Row 36	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	213,780.00		156,780.00		
Row 37						
Row 38	Income:					
Row 39	Sale of meals	-2,000.00		-2,000.00		
Row 40	Lets					
Row 41	External care provider					
Row 42	Other					
Row 43	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-2,000.00		-2,000.00		
Row 44		42,356.00				
Row 45	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	211,780.00		154,780.00		

assumed number of pupils 5

Table 2

Capital costs	
Capital cost avoidance - budgeted	22,000.00
Capital cost avoidance - not budgeted	
Additional capital expenditure required at receiving school(s) - budgeted	
Additional capital expenditure required at receiving school(s) - not budgeted	
BALANCE OF CAPITAL AMOUNT	

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	1,000.00
non domestic rates	2,200.00
water & sewerage rates	1,100.00
electricity	2,100.00
gas	2,300.00
heating oil	
biomass	
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	
security costs	
building repair & maintenance	
grounds maintenance	2,300.00
facilities management costs	1,400.00
other	9,900.00
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	22,300.00

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
redundancy and early retirement	
contract break costs	
other	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5

Impact on GAE - note 5	
Primary school teaching staff	

Notes

1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and non-teaching staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the *additional* cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring.

For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff.

Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services.

For non-teaching staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff.

For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs.

Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.

2. Supply costs to cover teaching and non-teaching staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.

3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc

4. Row 33 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.

5. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document.

Appendix 3 - Strachan School Current Catchment Area

