

Appendix A2

Frequently Asked Questions

Merger of Fraserburgh North School and St Andrews School into a New Primary School Provision in Fraserburgh

Q. When will the new school be built?

- A. The current plan is that the construction works could start in August 2024 and be completed in October 2025. There are a number of stages that the Council needs to go through in terms of design, planning and consultation between now and then.

The Council intends to launch a statutory consultation on the proposal to merge Fraserburgh North School and St Andrews School within a new Primary School located at the Fraserburgh Academy site in December 2022.

Q. Will the school be large enough? What if it is too big?

- A. The new school will be built with a capacity of 450 primary pupils. There are currently 415 pupils attending the two schools in total. A rezoning exercise will take place as part of the project to create a catchment area for the new school. This will make sure that there is capacity in the right places for all future pupils. The new building will adapt to future learning and teaching requirements, it will provide a high-quality learning environment offering greater flexibility for all school activities and future changes.

Q. Will class sizes double if Fraserburgh North and St Andrews are merged?

- A. There will be no change to class sizes if the schools merge, instead there will be more classes. In line with Aberdeenshire Council Policy the maximum class sizes are:

P1 – 25 pupils
P2-P3 – 30 pupils
P4-P7 – 33 pupils
Composite classes – 25 pupils

Q. What facilities will be in the building?

- A. The proposed school will be a Primary Enhanced Provision, fully accessible, designed in line with the Aberdeenshire Council New Build Primary Brief and Accessibility Design Brief.

Details of the final designs will be determined through the design process. It will be a two-storey building and will comprise of purpose-built accommodation designed to meet the learning and care needs of mainstream pupils and those with additional support needs, such as:

- Classrooms and associated breakout space

- General Purpose spaces, such as a hall, dining area, music and drama room
- Enhanced Provision spaces, such as life skills area, therapy room, nurture space, quiet area, sensory room, low stimulation area
- Outdoor learning spaces and garden

Q. Will the new building be heating and electricity cost efficient?

A. To meet national and the Council's own sustainability targets the building needs to achieve a high level of energy performance. It is proposed that the new school will be built to Passivhaus specifications. Passivhaus is an approach to building and construction which considers a wide range of considerations around quality, materials, sunlight, orientation and design to maximise the sustainability and reduce the carbon footprint.

The school design will use improved insulating materials and sustainable building products that will increase the efficiency of energy. The design, construction and operation will be environmentally and energy efficient, contributing directly to delivering the year-on-year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Service aims to build schools equipped with renewable energy technologies which will reduce the amount of electricity, compared to how much the current buildings consume each year.

Q. Will the building meet the needs of pupils with Additional Support Needs?

A. The new build will be an Enhanced Provision School, which means that it will be a mainstream primary school with an enhanced level of resources, such as access to a low stimulation spaces, sensory rooms, nurture hubs and life skills areas. There will be therapy spaces and changing places toilets for pupils who require them.

Q. How will outdoor learning happen in a two-storey building?

A. The two-storey building is proposed for the new school to prevent further reduction in green spaces on the site. Ground floor classrooms will have straight access to the outdoor learning areas, while upstairs will have access to a terrace. There has already been a lot of work by Landscape Architects with the views of pupils also incorporated. The final design is still being developed.

Q. Will the community be involved in the design process?

A. As part of the statutory consultation, design and construction process, the Council will consult with a wide range of Fraserburgh stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers, pupils and the community members. This will be done through their involvement with Stakeholder Groups.

Q. Why not renovate the existing buildings?

A. The nature of the current buildings for both Fraserburgh North School and St Andrews School will not allow for Aberdeenshire Council Primary School Brief to be achieved, which includes landscaped outdoors, fully accessible buildings and pupils being taught on one site.

Q. Will the existing buildings be maintained?

A. As with all Council buildings, emergency repairs to the fabric and maintenance of the buildings will continue until the new school is ready.

Q. What will happen with the existing buildings?

A. Aberdeenshire Council has an Asset Disposal Policy which must be followed when assets become surplus to requirements. The St Andrews Infant Building may be used as a nursery after the merger, but this is still to be decided. The education service may declare the other school buildings surplus to requirement and these will first be offered to other council services. Any alternative uses of the buildings would have to be fully assessed through the asset disposal procedure. There are also opportunities for community groups to submit a Community Asset Transfer Application.

Q. Are there plans for a new Academy or will the current Academy be upgraded to create a community campus?

A. There are currently no plans for a new Fraserburgh Academy. However, in the last five years there has been an extensive programme of refurbishment and upgrade at Fraserburgh Academy.

Q. Is the Academy site set in stone?

A. On 21 June 2022 Banff & Buchan Area Committee endorsed the Fraserburgh Academy site as the preferred location to accommodate the new primary school.

Q. Is the proposed Academy site big enough for the new school?

A. The site is 5.37 acres. It is large enough to accommodate the new primary school and its associated infrastructure. In a test, the footprint of Ellon Academy was also placed on the site, to show that in the future a replacement academy could be built without needing to demolish the existing school first.

Q. The new primary school on the academy site will result in loss of significant part of the academy green space. How is this justified?

A. The proposed area for the new primary school currently has surface drainage issues and is therefore not regularly used by the academy. To compensate, a Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) will be provided specifically for use of the academy, which will benefit the academy pupils as well as the entire local community.

Q. Have other sites for the new primary school build been considered?

A. Yes, assessments for a new school in Fraserburgh have been ongoing since 2016. The Council has investigated several locations for a new primary school. Other sites that were considered include areas at Kessockbank and Memsie; the site of the JIC building and the existing school sites. These were ruled out through an options appraisal process due to size or distance from the current catchment areas.

It was concluded that the most appropriate solution was to share the site of Fraserburgh Academy. The land provides an opportunity for a campus-style educational approach and a central location within Fraserburgh.

Q. What about safety on the academy site during the building works? Will there be disruption for pupils?

- A. There will be no disruption for primary school pupils and staff during the construction period. During the construction process, pupils and staff will be kept informed on the progress of construction and may be given access to the site to see progress.

The contractors appointed to build the school will work closely with the academy management team to ensure that disruption is minimal for both the school and local residents, and to ensure site safety.

Q. These are two very different schools, how can a merger work?

- A. It is recognised that the proposal to merge both schools will present both opportunities and challenges. There is a commitment from both schools to collaborate to develop positive relationships and sense of mutual respect and responsibility within and across peer groups. The new school will develop shared values and ethos through an inclusive community. There is an opportunity to develop a sense of belonging, engagement and ownership for all pupils and staff across both the schools before the move.

The name of the new merged school and the uniform would be subject to further engagement prior to the new school opening. Pupils at both schools and the local community will be involved in deciding what the new school name, badge and uniform will be.

Q. Will there be shared spaces to be used by primary and secondary pupils?

- A. The new build will be located within the grounds of Fraserburgh Academy, therefore providing for a shared campus approach. There may be opportunities for primary classes to use some of the secondary spaces, such as drama, art or science, if the timetable allows.

Some of the new outdoor spaces such as the allotment will be available for timetabled use by the academy pupils.

Q. Will the primary grounds be separated/fenced from the academy grounds?

- A. The design is being finalised and there will be a physical separation between the two schools.

Q. Is Nursery included in the project scope?

- A. There are two options for nursery currently being considered. One is a standalone new build nursery on the academy site, the other is a refurbishment of the St Andrews School infant building.

Q. Have access to morning/after school care been considered?

A. This will be considered as the project develops. It is expected that any existing provision in the schools will be able to move to the new setting.

Q. Some are concerned about bullying, inappropriate behaviour and bad influence of the Academy children on Primary children?

A. Senior Management Teams of both the Academy and the new Primary will be responsible for developing shared policy and practice guidelines on promoting positive relationships, positive behaviour, respect and celebration of diversity including anti-bullying.

Many of the academy pupils are the older siblings of children who will be attending the primary school.

Bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. All children and young people have the right to learn in an environment that is free from bullying to enable them to fully develop the skills and confidence needed for life, work and for learning. Any bullying incidents will be dealt with in line with the establishment anti-bullying policy.

Q. How will the Council ensure that in-zone pupils are not pushed out by placing requests?

A. Any decisions on placing requests are made in line with the Out of Zone Placing Requests Policy and Procedures. All in zone pupils are entitled to a place at their zoned school. Spaces are also kept in each year group for new in zone children who might move into catchment during the school year.

Q. What about the additional distance to travel to the new school?

A. The new school will be less than half a mile away from the sites of both existing schools. Therefore, this should not have a large impact upon pupils being able to walk to school. In line with the Aberdeenshire Transport Policy, school transport is provided for primary school pupils who live over two miles walking distance from their catchment primary school, which in this instance is not the case.

Q. How will the Council manage the transition to the new school?

A. There will be a full transition planning process in place, involving all three schools. Some pupils may require an individual transition plan.

Staff, pupils, parents and the community will be able to visit the school prior to the opening allowing them to become comfortable and familiar with the new setting.

Q. Will both schools move into the new build at the same time?

A. Yes, both schools will start in the new building on the same day.

Q. Can Primary and Academy break times be differentiated?

A. The start and end times of the school day will be considered by the School Management Team as part of the Access Strategy for the building. Lunch and break times can be at various times; however, detailed engagement will take place with pupils, parents and staff as the project develops.

Q. What about traffic congestion and safety on Dennyduff Road?

A. The Council are working with the architects on the design of the new school and road infrastructure and a solution to minimise the impact on the road. All comments made during the consultation period and feedback from stakeholder groups will be considered. There will be representation from Roads Department on the stakeholder group to ensure their full involvement in the design of the new primary school.

The site will have separate pick up/drop off space for both primary and secondary age pupils with separate car parks for staff and visitors to both buildings. A road traffic and pedestrian survey will be undertaken to identify routes to school. This will ensure that the design accommodates these and introduces any necessary safety measures.

Q. Are there any implications for the current staff?

A. On completion of the new school all staff based at the existing Fraserburgh North School and St Andrews School at that time will transfer to the new school, in line with their existing contract and HR policies and procedures. If the merger does go ahead there will be one Head Teacher.

Consultation will take place with individual members of staff and Trade Unions at a time closer to the opening of the new school.

Q. How will Head Teacher be determined?

A. The final school management structure has yet to be agreed, but there would be one Head Teacher if two primary schools merge. The Aberdeenshire Council recruitment and selection process will be undertaken prior to the new school opening.

Q. What is the statutory consultation?

A. Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Council needs to consult with all stakeholders on whether the two schools should merge into one. The Council will publish a proposal document which details the planned merger and gives the educational benefits for the change. The document will be shared with all parents, pupils, staff and the wider community and the consultation will run for at least 6 weeks.

Q. Will a public meeting be held prior to the final decision?

A. A public meeting to discuss the proposal will be held during the consultation period. At the meeting the Council will present the reasons for the proposed merger. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments. A minute of

questions and views will be taken at the meeting. This will be published on our website and shared with Education Scotland.

Q. How is the decision made?

- A. Following the statutory consultation period, all responses will be sent to Education Scotland for their consideration. Officers will consider all feedback received as part of the consultation and will make a recommendation on the best way ahead, considering the educational benefits for future pupils. This will form part of a final consultation report, which includes Education Scotland's comments. The consultation report will be considered by Banff & Buchan Area Committee and then the Education and Children's Services Committee. The final decision on the proposal will be made by Full Council, and it is expected to happen late Autumn 2023.

At the end of the consultation process, the Council will enter an eight-week call-in period when members of the public can ask Scottish ministers to call-in the decision. If the decision is not called-in the Council will be able to proceed with the project. If the proposal is called-in the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels will consider the proposal. This may take up to 16 weeks. If the panel grants consent to the proposal, the Council will then commence the design and implementation process.

Q. Are there any proposed changes to the primary catchment areas?

- A. Yes. A new catchment area will need to be created for the new school. This will be part of a separate statutory consultation. The rezoning exercise will look at the catchment areas for all four schools in the town of Fraserburgh to make sure that their catchment areas are appropriate for the size of the school.

Q. What would the timeline for the rezoning be?

- A. Once the statutory consultation on the merger of the schools has been completed, officers will start an informal engagement with the public on possible new catchment areas. The new catchment areas in Fraserburgh would take effect on the completion of the new school, which is projected to be in October 2025.

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