



Agenda Item 6

**Proposed Consultation on the
Permanent Closure of Limerigg
and Bothkennar Primary Schools**

Falkirk Council

Title: Proposed Consultation on the Permanent Closure of Limerigg and Bothkennar Primary Schools
Meeting: Education, Children and Young People Executive
Date: 26 January 2021
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks the agreement of the Education, Children and Young People Executive to progress to a formal statutory consultation on a proposal to permanently close both Limerigg and Bothkennar Primary Schools.

2 Recommendations

Education, Children and Young People Executive is asked to agree that:

- (i) a formal consultation in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is undertaken on a proposal to permanently close Limerigg and Bothkennar Primary Schools: and
- (ii) a report from the consultation will come to a future meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Executive for a decision on this proposal

3 Background

3.1 Current Status of Bothkennar and Limerigg Primary Schools

On 26 March 2019, the Education Executive agreed that both Bothkennar and Limerigg Primary Schools would be mothballed from August 2019, subject to an annual review of demand for places.

In this report there was also a commitment that:

“if either or both of these schools remains mothballed for a period of 2 years, a further report will be brought to elected members on future options.”

Both schools remain closed with no plans to re-open them beyond August 2021 due to continued low catchment area demand for places.

3.2 Reason for the Mothballing Decision

Pupil numbers at both these primaries had fallen well below the agreed threshold of 10 catchment pupils with no expectation that this would change in the forthcoming 2 years. The school Census for 2018/19 reported just 4 pupils attending Bothkennar Primary School and 5 pupils at Limerigg Primary School.

It was agreed at the Education Executive on 4 September 2018 that, due to viability concerns, mothballing should be considered where a school's roll falls below 10 catchment pupils.

4 **Considerations**

4.1 Current and Projected Pupil Numbers

Bothkennar Primary School Catchment Area

In the 5 years running up to the decision to mothball the school, demand for places had declined considerably, year on year. The following table shows the school roll over this period (taken from the annual school census):

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
No. Pupils	27	25	17	11	4

Data shows that the number of primary age children in the Bothkennar catchment area has reduced by 18% over the last 3 years. Also, data on pre-school population numbers supplied by Forth Valley Health Board in July 2020, shows this decline in the primary age population will continue over the next 5 years.

Based on all known data, there will be no increase in catchment demand for places in the coming 5 years to justify re-opening the school.

Limerigg Primary School Catchment Area

In the 5 years running up to the decision to mothball the school, demand for places had also declined every year to very low numbers. The following table shows the school roll over this period (taken from the annual school census):

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
No. Pupils	25	20	18	14	5

Current data shows that the number of primary age children in the Limerigg catchment area has remained the same over the last 3 years. However, data on pre-school population numbers, supplied by Forth Valley Health Board in July 2020, suggests that the primary age population can be expected to decline over the next 5 years.

Based on all known data, there will be no increase in catchment demand for places in the coming 5 years to justify re-opening the school.

4.2 Previous Consultation on Mothballing Proposal

A non-statutory consultation was undertaken with parents on the proposals to mothball both primary schools in early 2019. Only one response from each set of parents was received, both were supportive of the proposals.

4.3 Statutory Consultation Arrangements Under Covid-19 Restrictions

The only element of a statutory school closure consultation that is affected by current Covid-19 restrictions will be the public meeting. Whilst such meetings are an important element in the consultation process, the Covid restrictions may mean that these are not able to be held.

The proposals therefore also include the option to hold a virtual public meeting to ensure that there is a public forum to allow discussion on the closure proposals to take place. Depending on the Covid situation at the time the consultation proposals also allow for the consultation period to be extended to accommodate matters.

4.4 Strategic Property Review

It was agreed at the Education, Children and Young People Executive on 8 December 2020 that further mothballing of primary schools would be only progressed if they form part of the wider development of proposals under the Strategic Property Review.

It should be noted that the ongoing mothballing and proposed closure of Bothkennar and Limerigg Primary Schools can be progressed as they align with the developments within Strategic Property Review.

4.5 Proposed New Housing Development in Limerigg

Although planning permission in principle was granted on 25 September 2019 for a development of 90 new houses in Limerigg there is no indication currently that this development will progress anytime soon.

Should this proposal come to full fruition it would potentially lead to c.25-30 new primary age pupils in the village. Whilst such a development once fully completed would make Limerigg Primary School more viable, these additional pupils could also be comfortably accommodated at Slamannan Primary School which is 1.5 miles away. A Section 75 legal agreement accompanies this planning permission to ensure the funds are available to make any the necessary school alterations to accommodate these extra pupils.

5 Consultation Process

5.1 Statutory Requirements

Formal consultation is required for any proposal to permanently close a school. The consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

5.2 Consultation Period

It is proposed that the consultation takes place over a 8 week period running up to the Easter holidays, between Monday 8 February and Thursday 2nd April 2021. This meets and exceeds the legislative minimum period of 30 term-time days and allows extra time for disruption due to Covid-19.

If Covid-19 restrictions during this period do not allow public meetings to take place then virtual/digital alternatives will be arranged. The extended consultation period offers flexibility around this to accommodate the Covid restrictions and guidance that would be in place then.

5.3 Publicity

In accordance with the legislation, a statutory notice outlining the details of the consultation and planned public meetings will be placed in the Falkirk Herald and the Falkirk Advertiser. In addition, full details of the proposal will be shown in the “Have Your Say” section on the Council website.

5.4 Public Meetings

Subject to Covid restrictions in place at the time, and social distancing requirements, there will be 2 public meetings held as follows:

Bothkennar Primary School on Tuesday 2nd March at 6:30pm

Limerigg Community Hall on Tuesday 9th March at 6:30pm

In the event that Covid restrictions do not permit indoor, socially distanced meetings, then arrangements would be made to hold both meetings virtually/digitally.

The nature of this consultation means that the numbers attending are likely to be manageable in this format, but the proposed extended consultation period also allows a more flexible approach to be taken to ensure that everyone who wishes to contribute to the response has the opportunity to do so.

5.5 Proposal Documents

The proposal documents are attached as Appendix 1. These will be sent to all statutory consultees (see below) and will be made available during the consultation period on the Council website and at schools affected, as well as

the Council Offices and libraries that are open to the public at the time.

Unlike previous consultations, the proposal documents will not contain a proforma response form. Instead the consultees will be encouraged to respond online in the Consultation Hub on the Council website. Written responses to the proposal documents by letter or email will also be accepted.

5.6 Statutory Consultees

At the start of the consultation period, the proposal document with a covering letter will be sent to:

- (i) parents and carers of all primary and nursery age pupils living in the catchment area of each affected school (including Beancross and Slamannan Primary Schools)
- (ii) the parent council of each affected school (currently Beancross and Slamannan Primary Schools)
- (iii) pupils at each affected school
- (iv) school staff and trade unions
- (v) community councils affected by the proposal (Grangemouth and Slamannan/Limerigg)

In addition because this is a proposal to close two rural schools (see section 5.8), all households in each area previously served by these schools (Skinflats and Limerigg) will be leafleted so that the views of the overall community can be also be considered during the consultation.

5.7 Education Benefits Statement

Each proposal must be accompanied by an Educational Benefit Statement that assesses the likely benefits for pupils that would be affected. This is contained within the proposal documents attached as Appendix 1.

5.8 Rural School Closure – Special Considerations

Bothkennar and Limerigg Primary Schools are both classified as rural schools. The legislation has a presumption against the closure of rural schools and, as such, requires that further special consideration is undertaken before any decision on such a proposal is made.

The factors that must be fully considered are:

- (i) the likely effect on the local community, particularly with regard to the sustainability of the community and community use of the school premises; and
- (ii) the likely effect of changed travelling arrangements on school pupils and staff, and the environmental impact of this.

Given the first point in particular can only be fully explored through wider community engagement that is why it is proposed to leaflet of local households to allow them to be aware of the proposals and to allow them to participate in the consultation if they wish.

Both of these points are fully addressed in the proposal document attached at Appendix 1.

5.9 Involvement of Education Scotland

The involvement of Education Scotland is a requirement of the 2010 Act. Education Scotland will be invited to attend the public meetings and discuss the proposals with Children's Services during the consultation period.

At the end of the consultation period, and in accordance with the requirement of the Act, a copy of all representations received will be forwarded to Education Scotland who are then required to submit a report back to the Council within 3 weeks.

5.10 Preparation and Publication of the Consultation Report

Following receipt of the Education Scotland report, Children's Services will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report which will detail all responses to the consultation and include:

- letters and emails received
- a summary of the responses received on the website
- minutes from the public meetings held
- the report from Education Scotland

The Consultation Report will be published on the Falkirk Council website and respondents to the consultation will be made aware of it. No decision to proceed with the proposal can be made until at least 3 weeks after the publication of the Consultation Report.

5.11 Report back to the Education, Children and Young People Executive

Following the consultation and publication of the Consultation Report, a report will be brought back to the Education, Children and Young People Executive that provides both Children's Services overall views and recommendations on how to proceed with the proposed closures.

5.12 Notification to Scottish Ministers

Following a decision to close either or both schools, the Council will be required to:

- notify Scottish Ministers; and
- place a notice of this on the Council website to publicise the opportunity for the public to make representation to Scottish Ministers within 3 weeks

Scottish Ministers will then have 8 weeks from the date notified to consider whether to “call-in” the decision. In the event that such a decision is “called in”, it will be referred to the School Closure Review Panel for further consideration.

If the decision is not called in within the 8 week period set out in legislation, then the permanent closure can then proceed.

6 Implications

Financial/Resources

- 6.1 It is a requirement of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 that the Proposal Document contains details of the financial implications of any school closure proposal. The proposal document therefore summarises these and the full financial analysis detailing the implication of this proposal is also attached in Appendix 2. This is completed using the template provided by Scottish Government for school closure proposals.

Legal

- 6.2 The consultation on proposed school closures must be fully in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Risk/Equalities

- 6.3 None

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.4 None

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Bothkennar and Limerigg Primary Schools are now in the second year of mothballing and, as such, future options for these schools and property assets must be considered.
- 7.2 There is no prospect in the foreseeable future that demand for primary school places will increase in these areas to justify consideration of reopening either school. Current data suggests that demand for school places will continue to decline for the next 5 years. For this reason, it is proposed that both schools are permanently closed.
- 7.3 Any proposal for a permanent school closure requires a statutory consultation is undertaken before a final decision can be made. This report outlines the consultation process required and requests permission from the Education, Children and Young People Executive to proceed with this.

Director of Children's Service

Author – Gary Greenhorn email: gary.greenhorn@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 21/11/2020

Appendices

Appendix 1a: Proposal Document – Bothkennar Primary School

Appendix 1b: Proposal Document – Limerigg Primary School

Appendix 2a: Financial Implications – Bothkennar Primary School

Appendix 2b: Financial Implications – Limerigg Primary School

Appendix 1a

PERMANENT CLOSURE OF BOTHKENNAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

February 2021

PROPOSAL

Proposed Change	That Bothkennar Primary School, which has been mothballed since August 2019, is closed permanently.												
Background	<p>During school session 2018/2019, the pupil roll at Bothkennar Primary School fell to just 4 pupils after a prolonged period of declining numbers. Following a consultation with affected parents and the school community, it was agreed that Bothkennar Primary School would be mothballed, subject to an annual review of demand for pupil places, and that Beancross Primary School would become the proxy catchment school for the area.</p> <p>Two years on, the primary age population in the Bothkennar Primary School Catchment area has declined further, with no prospect of this trend changing in the foreseeable future. For this reason, it is now proposed that the school is permanently closed.</p> <p>Before any final decision can be taken on a permanent school closure proposal a formal consultation is required in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This proposal document provides full details of the proposal and the consultation process now underway.</p>												
Pupil numbers in the area	<p>In the 5 years running up to the decision to mothball the school, demand for places had declined each year to very low levels. The following table shows the school roll over this period (taken from the annual school census):</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>2014/2015</td><td>2015/2016</td><td>2016/2017</td><td>2017/2018</td><td>2018/2019</td></tr><tr><td>No. Pupils</td><td>27</td><td>25</td><td>17</td><td>11</td><td>4</td></tr></table> <p>Pupil data shows that the number of primary age children in the Bothkennar catchment area has reduced by 18% over the last 3 years, and other data shows just 8 pre-school children aged 4 and younger living in the catchment area. This suggests that the primary age population will continue to decline over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Based on all known data, there will be no increase in catchment demand for places in the coming 5 years to justify re-opening the school.</p>		2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	No. Pupils	27	25	17	11	4
	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019								
No. Pupils	27	25	17	11	4								
Proposed Alternative Arrangements	The arrangements in place from August 2019 will continue. Beancross Primary School will remain the catchment primary school for children living in area and free school transport will be provided to pupils choosing their catchment school.												
Educational Benefits Statement	<p>Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Falkirk.</p> <p>With this in mind, Falkirk Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing the school estate:</p>												

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
5. Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary).
6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.

Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for young people. It is the Authority's view that Bothkennar Primary School cannot meet all of these criteria, whereas the current alternative catchment school, Beancross Primary, can.

While it may seem that having fewer pupils in a class would allow a teacher to provide more one-on-one attention, fewer is not always better, when it comes to our pupils learning experiences. Classes low in pupil numbers, have disadvantages. These disadvantages are further compounded when we have a single class school, potentially with only one or two children at each year stage. Some of the problems commonly associated with teaching a small group of pupils are:

(i) Attendance Issues

While one or two pupils missing a large class isn't a major issue, a small number of absent pupils can make a big difference in a small class. If there are only five or 10 pupils in a class, two missing pupils represent a much larger percentage of the class population, making it more difficult for the teacher to continue with planned lessons.

This will also significantly impact on the class dynamics and learning experiences of children in the single class setting, with the likely consequence that a child may be the only pupil at a particular stage. Thereby having no other pupil to share their learning experience with and benefit from those interactions;

(ii) Lack of Diversity

A smaller class is less likely to represent a diverse cross section of society. Pupils benefit from being members of diverse classes because they have the

opportunity to hear viewpoints that differ greatly from their own. While some small classes do have a diverse array of members, many are relatively homogeneous in nature and, as such, do not offer pupils the opportunity to learn in a diverse setting;

(iii) Overly Rapid Work Completion

While pupils having the opportunity to complete their work quickly may seem like a good thing, there are benefits to pupils moving through work more slowly and deliberately. In larger classes, pupils are commonly slowed in their work efforts by peers who need additional guidance. This temporary slowing gives these potentially speedy pupils the opportunity to more fully explore the topics covered in the lesson instead of simply racing through and failing to absorb the information;

(iv) Fewer Activity Options

Some academic activities require a minimum number of participants. Activities such as small group projects, group discussions or peer to peer learning activities are much harder to implement in a small class because there are fewer pupils to divide into groups, limiting pupils' options. Other options, such as large-scale games, may be impossible in single small settings because there are not enough pupils to allow for game play, or due to the wide variation in the age and physical development of the pupils, potentially making an activity unsafe. These opportunities help to stimulate and motivate the children, and provide them with skills for life.

Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the modern school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Beancross Primary has sufficient pupils to allow the children to work collaboratively on various topics and activities. The class teachers will work with both individuals and groups at each stage of the curriculum, and the group working allows pupils to develop different skills from those that are developed during individual work.

Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood;

(v) Increased Pupil Anxiety

Some pupils enjoy the anonymity associated with being a member of a large class. These pupils are uncomfortable in the spotlight and prefer to blend in with the crowd as they move through the process of learning. For pupils of this nature, small classes are far from desirable because in educational settings with reduced pupil numbers they do not have the same opportunity to mix in with their peer group.

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; and

	<p>(vi) Pupil performance</p> <p>Smaller classes do not help children achieve better marks in primary school, according to research published recently. The findings, by academics at the University of London's Institute of Education, contradict the popular beliefs of teachers and parents that smaller classes make for a better learning environment.</p> <p>There are many other similar research papers detailing the negative impact of small class sizes on the pupils' learning experience and academic performance, due to the negative impact of the factors described above.</p>
<p>Community Impact</p>	<p>Bothkennar Primary School is classified as a rural school and, as such, this proposal to close it must consider the impact that this closure will have on the local community it serves. Prior to mothballing use/lets of the school was limited to Councillor Surgeries only.</p> <p><u>What will happen to the school building?</u></p> <p>The school is currently being used as temporary office accommodation for Council staff. There are plans underway to move these staff to other accommodation.</p> <p>Once the building becomes empty, it would be deemed surplus to Children's Services operational requirements and the Council's Asset Management Team would then consider what future options there are for the property, which could include potential sale. However, it is important that all community views are considered prior to this happening and we would welcome your views on possible future uses for this building, should the school close permanently.</p>
<p>Transport/ Sustainability Implications</p>	<p>Another important consideration with any rural school closure is the transport demands arising from the relocation of pupils to a school that is further away. Bothkennar Primary School has been temporarily closed for nearly 2 years now and all pupils from the area are entitled to free school transport to Beancross Primary School, which is 2.5 miles from Skinflats.</p> <p>School transport is currently provided through extending the existing school bus route by half a mile from the Grangemouth Old Town. There is no cost implications to families affected by the closure. A permanent closure would continue to have very little impact in this respect on costs to the council or distance covered by vehicles.</p> <p>With regard to sustainability concerns, the requirement to transport pupils to Beancross Primary School is more than offset by the closure of this facility which would require disproportionate levels of heating, electricity and maintenance to keep open for so few pupils in comparison.</p>
<p>Financial Considerations</p>	<p>The annual operating costs for the school for 2018/19 was £ 186,632 which represented £ 46,658 per pupil.</p> <p>Based on a slightly different financial assessment used for national benchmarking purposes the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) this shows the cost per pupil for 2018/19 to be £ 40,627.</p>

This cost per pupil is significantly higher than both the Falkirk and overall Scottish average cost per primary pupil, which were £ 4,655 and £ 5,259 respectively and reflects the disproportionately higher level of cost per pupil that schools with small rolls have.

The permanent closure of Bothkennar Primary School would result in a net annual saving of £ 166,535 which would allow additional financial resources to be redistributed to support the education sector.

Note: This saving does not take into account the temporary additional costs being incurred whilst operating this vacant building as an office.

In addition, following closure, any costs associated with the upkeep and associated on-going maintenance of this buildings, which is now circa 50 years old, would no longer need to be met. This would allow the Council to use these funds to invest in the wider school estate where it can benefit a larger number of pupils.

CONSULTATION

Legislation	<p><u>Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010</u></p> <p>A formal consultation is required for any proposal to permanently close a school. This consultation is fully in accordance with the requirements of this legislation.</p>
Consultees	<p>We will be consulting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers of all primary and nursery age pupils living in the catchment areas of Bothkennar and Beancross Primary Schools • Beancross Primary School Parent Council • Pupils at Beancross Primary School • School staff and trade unions • Grangemouth Community Council • All households in the Bothkennar Primary School catchment
Consultation Period	<p>The consultation will take place over an 8 week period running up to the Easter holidays, between Monday 8 February and Thursday 2 April 2021. If Covid-19 restrictions during this period do not permit public meetings then a virtual/digital alternative will be provided.</p> <p>The consultation period has been extended to allow flexibility to be applied to local engagement and to take cognisance of the Covid restrictions and guidance in place at that time.</p>
Public Meeting	<p>Subject to Covid restrictions in place at the time, and social distancing requirements, there will be a public meeting at Bothkennar Primary School on Tuesday 2nd March at 6:30pm.</p> <p>In the event that Covid restrictions at the time do not permit indoor, socially distanced meetings, a video meeting will be arranged.</p> <p>If you would like to be involve in this meeting, please provide us with your contact details so that we can manage numbers attending and keep you updated on the format of the meeting when Covid restrictions affecting the date are confirmed (contact details below).</p> <p>Also, we would urge anyone that would like to participate, but feel that they would be limited by Covid restrictions and/or an online video meeting to contact us directly to discuss (contact details below).</p>
How to Respond	<p>Please respond online using the Consultation Hub on the Falkirk Council at:</p> <p><WEBSITE URL TO BE INSERTED ONCE WEB PAGE IS SET UP AND PRIOR TO DISTRIBUTION OF THIS PROPOSAL DOCUMENT></p> <p>If you would prefer to write to us directly then you can using the email or postal address shown in the contact details below.</p>

Following the Consultation	<p>All responses should be provided by Thursday 2nd April 2021.</p> <p>With the current Covid restrictions that are in place all submissions should be in writing or via email.</p> <p>Education Scotland will receive details of consultation responses and the public meeting and will provide Children's Services with a report after the consultation.</p> <p>Children's Services will then prepare a consultation report which will be published on the council website. All respondents to this consultation will be notified when it is available.</p> <p>The consultation report will be discussed by councillors at the Education, Children and Young People Executive later in the year where they will decide on the matter.</p>
Contact Details	<p>Informal telephone enquiries concerning these proposals can be made on 01324 506621. (This service may be restricted due to Covid restrictions)</p> <p>Please respond to the online consultation response form if you can (see above), but if you would like to write to us directly in response, please email us at educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk or use the following postal address:</p> <p>Bothkennar Primary School Closure Consultation Children's Services Sealock House 2 Inchyra Road Grangemouth FK3 9XB</p>

Appendix 1b

PERMANENT CLOSURE OF LIMERIGG PRIMARY SCHOOL

A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

February 2021

PROPOSAL

Proposed Change	That Limerigg Primary School, which has been mothballed since August 2019, is closed permanently.												
Background	<p>During school session 2018/2019, the pupil roll at Limerigg Primary School fell to just 5 pupils after a prolonged period of declining numbers. Following a consultation with affected parents and the school community, it was agreed that Limerigg Primary School would be mothballed, subject to an annual review of demand for pupil places, and that Slamannan Primary School would become the proxy catchment school for the area.</p> <p>Two years on, the primary age population in the Limerigg Primary School Catchment area has not changed, with the prospect of declining numbers over the coming 5 years. For this reason, it is now proposed that the school is permanently closed.</p> <p>Before any final decision can be taken on a permanent school closure proposal a formal consultation is required in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This proposal document provides full details of the proposal and the consultation process now underway.</p>												
Pupil numbers in the area	<p>In the 5 years running up to the decision to mothball the school, demand for places had declined each year to very low levels. The following table shows the school roll over this period (taken from the annual school census):</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>2014/2015</td><td>2015/2016</td><td>2016/2017</td><td>2017/2018</td><td>2018/2019</td></tr><tr><td>No. Pupils</td><td>25</td><td>20</td><td>18</td><td>14</td><td>5</td></tr></table> <p>Pupil data shows that the number of primary age children in the Limerigg catchment area has remained the same over the last 3 years, and other data shows just 9 pre-school children aged 4 and younger living in the catchment area. This suggests that the primary age population will decline over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Based on all known data, there will be no increase in catchment demand for places in the coming 5 years to justify re-opening the school.</p>		2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	No. Pupils	25	20	18	14	5
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No. Pupils	25	20	18	14	5								
Proposed Alternative Arrangements	The arrangements in place from August 2019 will continue. Slamannan Primary School will remain the catchment primary school for children living in area and free school transport will be provided to pupils choosing their catchment school.												
Educational Benefits Statement	<p>Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Falkirk.</p> <p>With this in mind, Falkirk Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing the school estate:</p>												

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.
4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
5. Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary).
6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.

Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for young people. It is the Authority's view that Limerigg Primary School cannot meet all of these criteria, whereas the current alternative catchment school, Slamannan Primary, can.

While it may seem that having fewer pupils in a class would allow a teacher to provide more one-on-one attention, fewer is not always better, when it comes to our pupils learning experiences. Classes low in pupil numbers, have disadvantages. These disadvantages are further compounded when we have a single class school, potentially with only one or two children at each year stage. Some of the problems commonly associated with teaching a small group of pupils are:

(i) Attendance Issues

While one or two pupils missing a large class isn't a major issue, a small number of absent pupils can make a big difference in a small class. If there are only five or 10 pupils in a class, two missing pupils represent a much larger percentage of the class population, making it more difficult for the teacher to continue with planned lessons.

This will also significantly impact on the class dynamics and learning experiences of children in the single class setting, with the likely consequence that a child may be the only pupil at a particular stage. Thereby having no other pupil to share their learning experience with and benefit from those interactions;

(ii) Lack of Diversity

A smaller class is less likely to represent a diverse cross section of society. Pupils benefit from being members of diverse classes because they have the

opportunity to hear viewpoints that differ greatly from their own. While some small classes do have a diverse array of members, many are relatively homogeneous in nature and, as such, do not offer pupils the opportunity to learn in a diverse setting;

(iii) Overly Rapid Work Completion

While pupils having the opportunity to complete their work quickly may seem like a good thing, there are benefits to pupils moving through work more slowly and deliberately. In larger classes, pupils are commonly slowed in their work efforts by peers who need additional guidance. This temporary slowing gives these potentially speedy pupils the opportunity to more fully explore the topics covered in the lesson instead of simply racing through and failing to absorb the information;

(iv) Fewer Activity Options

Some academic activities require a minimum number of participants. Activities such as small group projects, group discussions or peer to peer learning activities are much harder to implement in a small class because there are fewer pupils to divide into groups, limiting pupils' options. Other options, such as large-scale games, may be impossible in single small settings because there are not enough pupils to allow for game play, or due to the wide variation in the age and physical development of the pupils, potentially making an activity unsafe. These opportunities help to stimulate and motivate the children, and provide them with skills for life.

Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the modern school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Slamannan Primary has sufficient pupils to allow the children to work collaboratively on various topics and activities. The class teachers will work with both individuals and groups at each stage of the curriculum, and the group working allows pupils to develop different skills from those that are developed during individual work.

Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood;

(v) Increased Pupil Anxiety

Some pupils enjoy the anonymity associated with being a member of a large class. These pupils are uncomfortable in the spotlight and prefer to blend in with the crowd as they move through the process of learning. For pupils of this nature, small classes are far from desirable because in educational settings with reduced pupil numbers they do not have the same opportunity to mix in with their peer group.

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; and

<p>Community Impact</p>	<p>(vi) Pupil performance</p> <p>Smaller classes do not help children achieve better marks in primary school, according to research published recently. The findings, by academics at the University of London's Institute of Education, contradict the popular beliefs of teachers and parents that smaller classes make for a better learning environment.</p> <p>There are many other similar research papers detailing the negative impact of small class sizes on the pupils' learning experience and academic performance, due to the negative impact of the factors described above.</p> <p>Limerigg Primary School is classified as a rural school and, as such, this proposal to close it must consider the impact that this closure will have on the local community it serves. Before the school was mothballed, there was no community demand for out of hours/lets of this school.</p>
<p>Transport/ Sustainability Implications</p>	<p><u>What will happen to the school building?</u></p> <p>Once the building becomes empty, it would be deemed surplus to Children's Services operational requirements and the Council's Asset Management Team would then consider what future options there are for the property, which could include potential sale. However, it is important that all community views are considered prior to this happening and we would welcome your views on possible future uses for this building, should the school close permanently.</p> <p>Another important consideration with any rural school closure is the transport demands arising from the relocation of pupils to a school that is further away. Limerigg Primary School has been temporarily closed for nearly 2 years now and all pupils from the area are entitled to free school transport to Slamannan Primary School. A school bus is provided for pupils from Limerigg attending Slamannan Primary School.</p> <p>With regard to sustainability concerns, the requirement to transport pupils to Slamannan Primary School is more than offset by the closure of this facility which would require disproportionate levels of heating, electricity and maintenance to keep open for so few pupils in comparison.</p>
<p>Financial Considerations</p>	<p>The annual operating costs for the school for 2018/19 was £ 242,011 which represented £ 48,402 per pupil.</p> <p>Based on a slightly different financial assessment used for national benchmarking purposes the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) this shows the cost per pupil for 2018/19 to be £ 43,099.</p> <p>This cost per pupil is significantly higher than both the Falkirk and overall Scottish average cost per primary pupil, which were £ 4,655 and £ 5,259 respectively and reflects the disproportionately higher level of cost per pupil that schools with small rolls have.</p> <p>The permanent closure of Limerigg Primary School would result in a net annual saving of £ 126,388 compared to the cost of re-opening it.</p>

	<p>In addition the maintenance and repair costs for Limerigg Primary School have been particularly high in recent years due to the remote and exposed location and recognising that the school is now over 80 years old. Following closure, any costs associated with the upkeep and associated on-going maintenance of this building, would no longer need to be met. This would allow the Council to use these funds to invest in the wider school estate where it can benefit a larger number of pupils.</p>
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CONSULTATION

Legislation	<p>Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010</p> <p>A formal consultation is required for any proposal to permanently close a school. This consultation is fully in accordance with the requirements of this legislation.</p>
Consultees	<p>We will be consulting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers of all primary and nursery age pupils living in the catchment areas of Limerigg and Slamannan Primary Schools • Slamannan Primary School Parent Council • Pupils at Slamannan Primary School • School staff and trade unions • Slamannan/Limerigg Community Council • All households in the Limerigg Primary School catchment
Consultation Period	<p>The consultation will take place over an 8 week period running up to the Easter holidays, between Monday 8 February and Thursday 2 April 2021. If Covid-19 restrictions during this period do not permit public meetings then a virtual/digital alternatives will be provided.</p> <p>The consultation period has been extended to allow flexibility to be applied to local engagement and to take cognisance of the Covid restrictions and guidance in place at that time.</p>
Public Meeting	<p>Subject to Covid restrictions in place at the time, and social distancing requirements, there will be a public meeting at Limerigg Community Hall on Tuesday 9th March at 6:30pm.</p> <p>In the event that Covid restrictions at the time do not permit indoor, socially distanced meetings, a video meeting will be arranged.</p> <p>If you would like to be involve in this meeting, please provide us with your contact details so that we can manage numbers attending and keep you updated on the format of the meeting when Covid restrictions affecting the date are confirmed (contact details below).</p> <p>Also, we would urge anyone that would like to participate, but feel that they would be limited by Covid restrictions and/or an online video meeting to contact us directly to discuss (contact details below).</p>
How to Respond	<p>Please respond online using the Consultation Hub on the Falkirk Council at:</p> <p><WEBSITE URL TO BE INSERTED ONCE WEB PAGE IS SET UP AND PRIOR TO DISTRIBUTION OF THIS PROPOSAL DOCUMENT></p> <p>If you would prefer to write to us directly then you can using the email or postal address shown in the contact details below.</p> <p>All responses should be provided by Thursday 2nd April 2021.</p>

Following the Consultation	<p>With the current Covid restrictions that are in place all submissions should be in writing or via email.</p> <p>Education Scotland will receive details of consultation responses and the public meeting and will provide Children's Services with a report after the consultation.</p> <p>Children's Services will then prepare a consultation report which will be published on the council website. All respondents to this consultation will be notified when it is available.</p> <p>The consultation report will be discussed by councillors at the Education, Children and Young People Executive later in the year where they will decide on the matter.</p>
Contact Details	<p>Informal telephone enquiries concerning these proposals can be made on 01324 506621. (This service may be restricted due to Covid restrictions)</p> <p>Please respond to the online consultation response form if you can (see above), but if you would like to write to us directly in response, please email us at educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk or use the following postal address:</p> <p>Limerigg Primary School Closure Consultation Children's Services Sealock House 2 Inchyra Road Grangemouth FK3 9XB</p>

Appendix 2a – FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (BOTHKENNAR PS)

Proposed Bothkennar Primary School Closure

Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs) (based on Financial Year 2018/2019)	Additional financial impact on receiving school (Beancross PS) (based on Financial Year 2020/2021)	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Bothkennar Primary School			
School costs			
<i>Employee costs</i>			
teaching staff	£ 79,989	£ -	£ 79,989
support staff	£ 20,962	£ -	£ 20,962
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	£ 351	£ -	£ 351
support staff training	£ -	£ -	£ -
Supply costs	£ 28	£ -	£ 28
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	£ 2,565	£ -	£ 2,565
non domestic rates	£ 10,320	£ -	£ 10,320
water & sewerage charges	£ 952	£ -	£ 952
energy costs	£ 13,369	£ -	£ 13,369
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£ 10,126	£ -	£ 10,126
building repair & maintenance	£ 1,153	£ -	£ 1,153
grounds maintenance	£ 122	£ -	£ 122
facilities management costs	£ 1,800	£ -	£ 1,800
revenue costs arising from capital	£ 34,690	£ -	£ 34,690
other	£ 1,561	£ -	£ 1,561
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	£ 2,532	£ 2,532	£ -
catering (contract or inhouse)	£ 4,188	£ 1,000	£ 3,188
SQA costs	£ -	£ -	£ -
other school operational costs	£ 1,813	£ -	£ 1,813
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	£ -	£ 4,750	-£ 4,750
other pupil transport costs	£ -	£ -	£ -
staff travel	£ 296	£ -	£ 296
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	£ 186,817	£ 8,282	£ 178,535
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals	-£ 185	-£ 185	£ -
Lets	£ -	£ -	£ -
External care provider	£ -	£ -	£ -
Other	£ -	£ -	£ -
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-£ 185	-£ 185	£ -
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	£ 186,632	£ 8,097	£ 178,535

Appendix 2a – FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (BOTHKENNAR PS)

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (4 pupils)	£ 46,658.00	£ 2,024.25	£ 44,633.75
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Annual Property costs incurred (mothballing) until disposal (Financial Year 2020/2021)	
property insurance	£ 2,565
non domestic rates	£ 10,168
water & sewerage charges	£ 1,778
energy costs	£ 7,499
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£ 7,651
security costs	
building repair & maintenance	£ 594
grounds maintenance	£ 200
facilities management costs	£ 1,800
other	£ 1,894
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	£ 31,584

NOTE: The building is currently in use as a temporary office space, so these costs are higher than would be expected for an empty property.

TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	£ 178,535
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IMPACT on GAE	£ 12,000
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NOTE: Reduction in Scottish Government small schools subsidy

TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS MINUS GAE REDUCTION (NET SAVING IF SCHOOL IS CLOSED)	£ 166,535
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Appendix 2b – FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (LIMERIGG PS)

Proposed Limerigg Primary School Closure

Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs) (based on Financial Year 2018/2019)	Additional financial impact on receiving school (Slamannan PS) (based on Financial Year 2020/2021)	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Limerigg Primary School			
School costs			
<i>Employee costs</i>			
teaching staff	£ 143,665	£ 53,811	£ 89,854
support staff	£ 16,816	£ -	£ 16,816
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	£ -	£ -	£ -
support staff training	£ -	£ -	£ -
Supply costs	£ 28	£ -	£ 28
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	£ 2,120	£ -	£ 2,120
non domestic rates	£ 6,624	£ -	£ 6,624
water & sewerage charges	£ 251	£ -	£ 251
energy costs	£ 9,828	£ -	£ 9,828
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	£ 8,816	£ -	£ 8,816
building repair & maintenance	£ 1,503	£ -	£ 1,503
grounds maintenance	£ 307	£ -	£ 307
facilities management costs	£ 1,800	£ -	£ 1,800
revenue costs arising from capital	£ 42,367	£ -	£ 42,367
other	£ 937	£ -	£ 937
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	£ 2,239	£ 2,239	£ -
catering (contract or inhouse)	£ 4,295	£ 1,000	£ 3,295
SQA costs	£ -	£ -	£ -
other school operational costs	£ 767	£ -	£ 767
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	£ -	£ 44,296	-£ 44,296
other pupil transport costs	£ -	£ -	£ -
staff travel	£ 371	£ -	£ 371
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	£ 242,734	£ 101,346	£ 141,388
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals	-£ 723	-£ 723	£ -
Lets			£ -
External care provider			£ -
Other			£ -
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	-£ 723	-£ 723	£ -
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	£ 242,011	£ 100,623	£ 141,388

Appendix 2b – FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS (LIMERIGG PS)

UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR (4 pupils)	£ 48,402.20	£ 20,124.60	£ 28,277.60
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Annual Property costs incurred (mothballing) until disposal (Financial Year 2020/2021)	
property insurance	£ 2,120
non domestic rates	£ 6,466
water & sewerage charges	£ 191
energy costs	£ 900
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	
security costs	
building repair & maintenance	£ 270
grounds maintenance	£ 488
facilities management costs	
other	
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	£ 8,315

TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	£ 141,388
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IMPACT on GAE	£ 15,000
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NOTE: Reduction in Scottish Government small schools subsidy

TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS MINUS GAE REDUCTION (NET SAVING IF SCHOOL IS CLOSED)	£ 126,388
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