



**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**  
**CONSULTATION REPORT**

**REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION RELATING TO THE  
PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BLAIRINGONE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**22 February 2019**

This Consultation Report has been issued by Perth and Kinross Council in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

### EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

This report has been prepared following consultation on the Council's proposal that:

- Provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- The pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- The delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- (a) Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period;
- (b) Oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public meetings held on 6 and 18 September 2018; and
- (c) Education Scotland's report on the proposal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a consultation report prepared in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the above proposal.

### 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide a record of the total number of written responses made during the Statutory Consultation period;
- Provide a summary of the written responses;
- Provide a summary of oral representations made at the public meeting held on 11 September 2018;
- Provide a statement of the Council's response to those written and oral representations;
- Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of the Council's response to this report;
- State how the Council reviewed the above proposal following the representations received during the Statutory Consultation period and the report from Education Scotland;
- Provide details of any omission from, or inaccuracy in, the [Proposal Paper](#) and state how the Council acted upon it; and
- State how the Council has complied with Sections 11A to 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 when reviewing the above proposals.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 2 November 2016, the Lifelong Learning Committee of Perth and Kinross Council approved [Report No 16/485](#) by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services). It approved the development of an options appraisal in relation to the future of Blairingone Primary School.
- 2.2 On 16 May 2018, Lifelong Learning Committee considered the [options appraisal](#) and agreed to commence formal consultation on a proposal to close Blairingone Primary School ([Report No 18/155 refers](#)) in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 2.3 The 2010 Act's principal purpose is to provide strong, accountable statutory consultation practices and procedures that local authorities must apply to their handling of all proposals for school closures and other major changes to schools. These consultation processes are expected to be robust, open, transparent and fair, and seen to be so. They are also expected to be consistent across Scotland.
- 2.4 The 2010 Act makes special arrangements in relation to rural schools, and establishes a presumption against the closure of rural schools. The result of this is that education authorities must have special regard to a number of factors before formalising a proposal to close a rural school and in consulting on and reaching a decision as to whether to implement a rural school closure proposal.
- 2.5 These duties are outlined in the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010 and the accompanying Statutory Guidance](#).
- 2.6 Lifelong Learning Committee reports and the Proposal Paper referred to above are available on the Council's website [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk).

## 3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The main considerations relating to the proposal are fully explained in the [Proposal Paper](#), and the main points are highlighted as follows:
- 3.2 Perth and Kinross Council works to enhance quality of life, make best use of public resources and ensure continuously improving services. Perth and Kinross Council's Corporate Plan "Securing the Future" aims to ensure that individuals, families and communities experience the best possible outcomes from a range of services.
- 3.3 Perth and Kinross Council has a strong identity and clear priorities which everyone works together to achieve, creating areas which are vibrant and successful; safe, secure, healthy and sustainable environments; educated, responsible and informed citizens; confident and active communities; and places where people are nurtured and supported, giving every child the best start in life.
- 3.4 The Council's Transformation Strategy 2015-2020 'Building Ambition' and Organisational Development Framework were approved by Council on 1 July 2015 ([Report No. 15/292 refers](#)). They detail how Perth and Kinross Council will deliver transformation over the five year period.

Accompanying the strategy is a programme of major reviews which are considered to be key drivers and enablers of transformation across the organisation.

- 3.5 On 24 August 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 16/347 refers](#)) approved principles to be used as a basis for the transformation review, 'Securing the Future of the School Estate'.
- 3.6 This approach reflects the Single Outcome Agreement National Outcome 15 that "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs", and the Local Outcome that "Our services will be responsive, of high quality and continually improving". This report also links with the School Estate Management Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Framework Maximising Resources and with the Education and Children's Services objective to develop the range and quality learning experiences for all.
- 3.7 Blairingone Primary School is a single teacher primary school serving the village of Blairingone and the surrounding area and is a feeder primary school for Kinross High School. Blairingone Primary School is situated approximately 4.5 miles from Fossoway Primary School. Strathdevon Primary School in Clackmannanshire is approximately 3 miles away.
- 3.8 The capacity of Blairingone Primary School is 25 pupils. The Blairingone Primary School roll at Census 2011 was 11 pupils and at Census 2017 was 4 pupils giving an occupancy of 16%.
- There were 17 pupils living within the catchment area for Blairingone Primary School at Census 2017. However, 8 of these pupils attended other schools in Perth and Kinross and 5 pupils from the catchment area attend Strathdevon School in Dollar as a result of successful placing requests made by their parents. At Census 2018, there were 17 pupils living within the catchment area for Blairingone Primary School with 5 of these pupils attending Fossoway Primary School and 6 pupils from the catchment area attend Strathdevon School in Dollar and 1 pupil attends Muckhart Primary School in Clackmannanshire as a result of successful placing requests made by their parents. It is possible that other pupils attend Dollar Academy, however this information is not available as data on pupils attending independent schools is not provided to the local authority.
- 3.9 Data from the NHS on pre-school children registered with GP practices living in the Blairingone Primary School catchment shows that although potential P1 intake numbers have remained relatively low over the last few years, they are much higher than the number of pupils who are attending the school.
- 3.10 Future pupil projections have been considered using aggregated GP registration data and Blairingone Primary School pupil numbers are projected to remain static over the next 4 years. There are low numbers of children under 5 years old projected to attend Blairingone Primary School over the next 4 years. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future and there is no suggestion going forward that this is likely to change.
- 3.11 As part of an [options appraisal](#), information was collated on pupil numbers, housebuilding, the school, travel arrangements, environmental impact, the local area and community and finances to inform the options.

As part of the review, a pre-consultation exercise was also carried out with the local community to inform the options appraisal for Blairingone Primary School. This allowed the community to consider options for the future of Blairingone Primary School and was an opportunity for the community to provide views on these options and identify any additional options which the Council should consider.

- 3.12 The Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP2) was approved for consultation by Council on 22 November 2017 ([Report No. 17/387 refers](#)). The aspiration is to have a final LDP to adopt by Autumn 2019.

A more flexible LDP2 framework for the landowners/community at Blairingone is being proposed due to the concerns over the effectiveness of site H74 due to concerns over ground stability as a result of past mine operations. The Council's proposed LDP2 proposes expanding H74 to create a new site named MU74. MU74 will include a maximum of 30 homes ie the same number of homes as in the current LDP, up to 2028.

It will also allow the opportunity for other uses such as community and small scale retail to come forward. The capacity restriction of 30 houses will form part of the adopted LDP2, if the site is not recommended for deletion, as no objection to this restriction has been raised during its consultation. In addition to H74/MU74 there are a number of small sites which are expected to build out in the next 4 to 6 years.

Out of the 5 small sites detailed in the options appraisals only 3 of these sites now remain in the Housing Land Audit (HLA). There are planning applications for 3 houses but no indication if these will go ahead. These 3 houses may produce 1 pupil for the school if they proceed. If all houses in the HLA were to build in the 5 year period from 2020 to 2025 there may be up to 5 additional children up to 2025. However, it must be recognised that most of the current pupils at Blairingone Primary School will no longer be at the school having moved on to secondary school during that period. Whilst the maximum number of potential pupils expected from these sites may be up to 5 pupils in the 5 year period 2020 to 2025, it must also be considered that it is unlikely that should this number materialise, that they would all attend Blairingone Primary School based on the established pattern of placing requests to attend other schools both within and outwith Perth and Kinross.

- 3.13 The projected future pupil numbers for the school does not include pupil numbers from house building. It is projected that house building in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area will continue to be limited with fewer than 5, if any, additional pupils for the school. Information indicates that housebuilding on suitable sites is unlikely to build out within timescales provided in the Housing Land Audit (HLA). This is because the house building has been in the planning stage for a number of years without sites developing and it is felt the programming contained within the Housing Land Audit (HLA) is optimistic.

While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades. To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone.

The Council is in the process of providing a response to a pre-application consultation for residential development on site MU74. The planning consent for the allocated site on the former Gartwhinzean Hotel in Powmill has lapsed

In addition, out of the 5 small sites detailed in the options appraisals only 3 of these sites now remain in the Housing Land Audit (HLA). There are planning applications for 3 houses but no indication if these will go ahead.

Projecting future pupil numbers to include potential housebuilding based on the above facts, in this particular circumstance, would provide unreliable and overstated data. For that reason, it is not considered in the future pupil projections for Blairingone Primary School.

- 3.14 Future pupil projections have been considered using aggregated GP registration data and both Fossoway Primary School and Blairingone Primary School pupil numbers are projected to remain static over the next 4 years. There are very low numbers of children under 5 years old in the Blairingone catchment area over the next 4 years. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future and there is no suggestion going forward that this is likely to change. The data for Blairingone shows that the number of children eligible to start school over the period 2019 – 2021 is 9 pupils.

If all houses in the HLA were to build in the 5 year period from 2020 to 2025 there may be up to 5 additional children up to 2025. Whilst the maximum number of potential pupils expected from these sites may be up to 5 pupils in the 5 year period 2020 to 2025, there is no evidence that confirms that these sites will proceed. Indeed, 2 of the 5 sites are no longer included in the HLA. It must also be considered that it is unlikely that should this number materialise, that they would all attend Blairingone Primary School based on the established pattern of placing requests made by parents for their children to attend other schools both within and outwith Perth and Kinross and, therefore, the number of pupils enrolling for school in Perth and Kinross is likely to be lower.

- 3.15 The highest projected occupancy rate for Blairingone Primary School is 20% in 2021/22 and at Fossoway Primary School, including pupils from projected housebuilding, is 73% in 2020/21.
- 3.16 This position presents a diminished and unsustainable school pupil population for Blairingone Primary School with no foreseeable prospect of an increased, stable pupil population. This is based on a reduced birth rate over a sustained period of time and the impact of placing requests being made by parents for pupils to attend other schools.
- 3.17 The low pupil roll at Blairingone Primary School presents challenges in providing a breadth of social and emotional experiences required to meet the needs of pupils.
- 3.18 The proposal for pupils from Blairingone to attend Fossoway Primary School has strong educational benefits for pupils from the Blairingone catchment area. It will increase pupils' resilience through being part of a larger school community and will also help promote their social and emotional development by providing greater challenge as well as the opportunity to be part of a wider, age-appropriate peer group.



- 3.19 Fossoway Primary School offers high quality learning experiences across the four contexts of learning that encourages high levels of achievement and provides a wide range of opportunities for children to achieve their full potential as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- 3.20 The Council has engaged with stakeholders and has considered other options prior to formulating its proposal. The details of the other options are detailed in this report in Section 4.
- 3.21 Parents still retain the right to make a placing request for another school of their choice as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
- 3.22 The permanent discontinuation of the provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter with the pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receiving their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter will have the following benefits:

3.23 **Learning and Teaching**

- Children attending Fossoway have access to a range of teaching and support staff from early years and primary. Fossoway has a nursery and five primary classes. This allows children to transition throughout the school as they get older and be taught by different practitioners in different settings.
- At Fossoway Primary School, staff are challenged and supported through a range of continuous professional development and review, which comes of having a Headteacher and five members of teaching staff, in five classes for 111 pupils (Census 2018).

Staff collaborate across the school for planning, learning and teaching to ensure children receive experiences that are relevant and present clear challenge and enjoyment. Flexibility in staffing at Fossoway means that good use can be made of the local context, for example by involving children in Outdoor Learning.

Staff also work together to moderate standards of learning and achievement in the school to ensure that children make appropriate progress in a structured and progressive way through Curriculum for Excellence levels.

- A collegiate approach to professional engagement amongst all staff is evident within the school. They come together regularly to review and improve practice as a school, with partner services and other schools in the Local Management Group. There is a strong commitment across all staff to lead improvements in learning and teaching from evidence based research.
- This enhances the quality of learning and teaching through shared opportunities to develop effective approaches and to share and moderate standards. Currently, Fossoway Primary School staff collaborate with other schools on Digital Learning, ensuring that staff share good practice across other schools in the area.
- Work is differentiated to adapt to pupils' needs and pupils benefit from being able to work on co-operative learning tasks with others.

Flexibility in staffing allows staff to be creative in planning for children with additional support needs both universally and for targeted need, thus addressing potential barriers to learning.

- The team at Fossoway Primary School have developed a diverse range of family learning programmes to meet the varying needs of families in the community and draws on expertise and knowledge across the community to enhance the learning and experiences for children across the school.
- Fossoway Primary School affords the opportunity for all children to build relationships with different groups and individuals, develop a range of skills and undertake group responsibilities, which the larger class sizes enable. Pupils work in groups, at peer level and across all stages in the school and in mixed sex groups. This allows the sharing of ideas, peer support, informal mentoring and relationship building, all of which contribute to the whole school experience for all pupils.
- The school has support from a Pupil Support Teacher, allowing for specialist teaching, which not only benefits pupils with Additional Support Needs, but all other pupils.

### **3.24 Environment for Learning**

- The school grounds at Fossoway provide facilities for the pupils to experience a range of team and individual sports, such as football, netball and basketball.
- Within the school grounds there are facilities to enhance imaginative learning and play, such as a climbing wall, fort and garden.
- Some classrooms are semi open plan, allowing the opportunity for children to work alongside each other in other classes and break out areas. These break out spaces allow for flexibility in teaching methods and afford a range of learning opportunities, from working in small groups, to allowing children of different stages and classes to work together.
- All classrooms have interactive screens, providing the opportunity for children to access the curriculum in modern and innovative ways, through the use of smartboards and interactive technology.
- The school uses additional classroom space flexibly to offer nurture support, additional support for learning and a meeting space for working groups, meetings and collaboration with partners.
- Fossoway Primary School is accessible for children and adults with Additional Support Needs. It is on one level and has fully accessible toilet facilities for children and adults.

### 3.25 Experiences and Opportunities

- The school has pupils of both sexes at each stage, allowing all pupils to interact and socialise with groups of children their own age and sex, at appropriate levels.
- The school has a house system that all children are members of, which enhances many aspects of school practice; including learning, promoting positive behaviour, buddying and mentoring, and school events.
- Pupil voice is evident at Fossoway Primary through the Learning Council, which allows them the opportunity to share and discuss learning across the school and identify areas for further improvements in the school.
- The school focuses on pupil led experiences and opportunities in a range of ways. There are pupil councils, facilitated by a teacher, but pupil led. These are the Eco Council, the Rights Respecting group, the Grounds and Outdoor Learning Council. These give pupils opportunities to lead and make decisions.
- Pupils facilitate a range of groups, such as Digital Learning, Fun Learning, Pupil Choir and Ukulele and Guitar Club. In addition, the pupils take control of the weekly school assembly, organising the agenda and ensuring that it runs smoothly, taking into account the needs of pupils and staff.
- Fossoway has an active Parent Council, which support the school in its work with parents and encourages links between school, parents, pupils and the community. Parental support enables the school to gain experiences out with the local community, and trips. Family learning programmes have been developed to further enhance parental involvement in children's learning.

#### **In Summary**

- Fossoway Primary is a bright, modern school, with mixed sex classes at all stages in the school, including nursery.
- The school roll allows all children to participate in peer support, classroom learning, and learning groups across stages and between classes, with the benefit of allowing children to have a wide and varied range of learning experiences.
- Learning and teaching at Fossoway starts with the early years provision, supporting a seamless transition to Primary One.
- The building lends itself to modern teaching methods, with good use of break out space, accessible and flexible teaching and outdoor areas and good facilities for sport and leisure.
- The school roll allows all children to participate in peer support, classroom learning, and learning groups across stages and between classes, with the benefit of allowing children to have a wide and varied range of learning experiences.
- The children and parents of Blairingone Primary School will have access to an educational establishment which has a well-planned and committed approach to taking forward improvement.

- There is sufficient capacity at Fossoway Primary School to fully meet the needs of the Blairingone Primary School children without having a detrimental impact on the learning of the existing pupils of Fossoway Primary School.

#### **4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 A number of options were considered for the future of Blairingone Primary School as part of the Options Appraisal:

##### **a) Blairingone Primary School remains open.**

The pupil roll projections reflect that there is no evidence to suggest that the roll will significantly increase in future years. Low future pupil numbers are unlikely to lead to a sufficient increase to make the school roll sustainable.

It is likely that house building in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years will be limited and will result in few, if any, additional pupils for the school as a result.

The financial implications of retaining the 'status quo' for the school are a continuation of the current running costs of approximately £115,574 per annum. There is a capital cost of approximately £245,424 required to upgrade the building in future years.

This option will not affect the community, travel arrangements or current pupils.

The reason for taking forward an options appraisal for Blairingone Primary School was that pupil numbers had been consistently low over recent years and there was concern over the sustainability of the school. The pupil roll projections reflect that there is no evidence to suggest that the roll will significantly increase in future years. The key issue is that out of 15 children who could attend the school currently, 10 of them attend neighbouring schools. In addition, low future pupil numbers are unlikely to lead to a sufficient increase to make the school roll sustainable.

It has not been possible to identify other steps which could increase the roll, whilst maintaining the status quo in terms of catchment area. This is therefore not considered a reasonable alternative.

##### **b) Consider mothballing Blairingone Primary School and move pupils to Fossoway Primary School.**

If Blairingone Primary School was mothballed, pupils would be accommodated at Fossoway Primary School which is approximately 4.5 miles away and is the nearest school in Perth and Kinross. Four out of 5 of the children at Blairingone are within walking distance of Blairingone Primary School. Children would have to travel between approximately 4.2 miles and approximately 6.4 miles to attend Fossoway Primary School. The maximum time spent travelling on the bus would be 27 minutes for the child who has to travel furthest.

In some other more rural areas within Perth and Kinross, pupils are travelling greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles away from the school they are designated to attend.

The revenue savings generated from mothballing Blairingone Primary School amount to approximately £85,626 annually. This is made up of staff and building costs however this takes account of additional transport costs of £28,500 for current pupils to attend Fossoway Primary School.

There would be reduced energy consumption if the school is to be mothballed. Children would travel further to school in Crook of Devon, however most would be provided with transport, including those who already attend Fossoway Primary School as the result of a successful placing request currently.

The roll at Blairingone Primary School is unlikely to exceed 5 pupils in the next 4 years. There is evidence that pupils from the catchment area currently choose to attend other schools in the area instead of Blairingone Primary School and this will be for a range of reasons. In addition, it is likely that house building in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years will be limited with few, if any, additional pupils for the school as a result.

It is also possible that if the school is mothballed, pending an increase in pupil numbers, children will become settled at Fossoway Primary School and would not return to Blairingone Primary School in the event of the school re-opening at a future date.

It could be considered that mothballing creates continued uncertainty for parents and the community. In addition, there are no opportunities to progress alternative uses for the building, which may include community asset transfer, lease or sale of the building, all of which may benefit the wider community. Therefore, on balance, it is considered that mothballing is more likely to be a negative than a positive, in terms of community impact.

If Blairingone Primary School was mothballed on an indefinite basis, Perth and Kinross Council would incur annual costs to maintain the building. Unoccupied buildings can deteriorate more rapidly than operational premises and can become a focus for opportunistic crimes and/or targets for vandalism whether the premises are located in urban or rural areas.

For the reasons above, mothballing the school in anticipation of increased pupil numbers due to house building is therefore not considered a reasonable alternative.

### **c) Consider closing Blairingone Primary School and move pupils to Fossoway Primary School.**

If Blairingone Primary School was closed, pupils would be accommodated at Fossoway Primary School which is approximately 4.5 miles away and is the nearest school in Perth and Kinross. Four out of 5 of the children at Blairingone are within walking distance of Blairingone Primary School. Children would have to travel between approximately 4.2 miles and approximately 6.4 miles to attend Fossoway Primary School.

The maximum time spent travelling on the bus would be 27 minutes for the child who has to travel furthest. In some other more rural areas within Perth and Kinross, pupils are travelling greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Pupils would be entitled to free home to school transport if they live more than 2 miles away from their designated school.

Fossoway Primary School currently accommodates a number of pupils from Blairingone Primary as a result of placing requests. Pupil numbers at Fossoway are projected to remain static for the next 4 years.

Fossoway Primary has capacity to continue to accommodate the projected pupil numbers should Blairingone Primary School be closed. This option is considered to be reasonable and further detail is provided in relation to educational benefits, travel, environmental impact and community impact.

There will be environmental benefits from a reduction in energy consumption if the school is to be closed. There is little negative environmental impact in relation to the transport of pupils or the travel arrangements of staff due to the relatively short distances and small numbers involved. There would be environmental benefits to Blairingone Primary School pupils being transferred to Fossoway Primary School in that they would be transported by the Council rather than travelling individually.

The revenue savings generated from closing Blairingone Primary School amount to approximately £85,626 including mothball costs annually. This is predominately made up of staff and building costs and is net of the annual transport costs of £28,500. The capital cost of upgrading the building of £245,424 would not be required. A capital receipt would be forthcoming if the building was sold or income would be generated through a lease.

Pupil numbers at Blairingone Primary School have been reducing year on year since 2011 when the school had 11 pupils. This is due to primary school age pupils attending alternative schools as a result of placing requests. The P1 intake figures over the next 3 years are also small, with a maximum of 9 children under 5 years old living in the catchment area. There were no pupils with a Blairingone catchment area address registered to start at Blairingone Primary School in August 2018. One child has been registered to start at Blairingone Primary School in August 2019 with one pupil leaving in P7.

It is not considered that the closure of the school would have a negative impact on the sustainability of the community.

Blairingone is located approximately 4.5 miles from Fossoway and approximately 3 miles from Dollar. The community currently travel to access health, retail and leisure facilities.

The school has not been used for lets recently by the community with the exception of Fossoway Community Council. There is, therefore, likely to be little impact on other users of the school if the school were to close. It is unlikely that closure of the school would result in the building being used for the community, as other community facilities such as the pub and village hall have closed down. The closure of these facilities would appear to indicate that there has not been enough demand to sustain them, possibly due to there being more and better facilities available in Dollar and Crook of Devon.

Pupil numbers at Blairingone Primary School have been reducing over recent years and the positive impact of Blairingone pupils on the school roll supports the sustainability of Fossoway Primary School which is also in a rural location and is a rural school.

Analysis of recent pupil information shows that the school roll is low primarily due to parents requesting placements at other local schools, including schools in other Local Authority areas. Currently only 5 out of 17 children living in the catchment area attend Blairingone Primary School.

It is likely that house building in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area over the next 4 years will be limited and will result in few, if any, additional pupils for the school as a result.

The number of pre-school children in the catchment area is very low and is likely to remain so.

It is considered that closure of the school is the most appropriate response to the issue of a decreasing roll. Low numbers of pre-school children in the catchment area coupled with parents choosing to place their children at other primary schools, has led to the very small school roll. There is no indication that the roll will increase in future years. This option also has the benefit of supporting the sustainability of Fossoway Primary School, which is approximately 4.5 miles from Blairingone Primary School and is also a rural school. There is no evidence to indicate that this option would have an adverse impact on the community, travelling arrangements or the environment.

**d) Catchment area is reviewed to determine whether this would increase the school roll sufficiently at Blairingone Primary School to ensure the future sustainability of the school.**

A catchment review can in principle be a reasonable option in some cases, to increase the sustainability of a school. An in-depth analysis in each case is required to ascertain if a sustainable increase in school roll could be achieved and a detrimental impact on neighbouring schools is not created as a result.

The area to the east of Blairingone as far as Powmill was identified as a potential extension to the catchment area, as it is the only area of Perth and Kinross that borders Blairingone Primary School's current catchment area.

The maximum number of primary school pupils who could attend Blairingone Primary School currently from this area is 15.

All of these pupils could choose whether to attend the new catchment school or not. There are fewer than 5 children living in this area under the age of 5.

A survey was compiled to consult with parents/carers in a specific area that would allow the catchment area of Blairingone Primary School to be expanded. Three out of four parents indicated that they would not send their children to Blairingone Primary School if the catchment was changed.

The pupil population from the area east of Blairingone up to Powmill is not sufficient to increase the pupil roll at Blairingone Primary School unless a large number of the primary school pupils attending Fossoway Primary School from the area choose to move school or children from the Blairingone Primary School catchment area start to attend their catchment school. Parents would not be required to move primary age children from their current school when a catchment review takes place and generally parents are reluctant to do so.

The survey did not evidence that Powmill parents would act contrary to this. There are not enough pre-school children to make the school roll sustainable.

Therefore, it is unlikely that increasing the catchment area into Powmill would create a sustainable pupil roll for Blairingone Primary School.

This is due to children from the Blairingone Primary School catchment area already choosing not to attend their catchment school and the parents living within the proposed extended area indicating that they would not send their children to Blairingone Primary School if the catchment area was changed. This option is therefore not considered a reasonable alternative.

## 4.2 Alternative Options

In developing the Options Appraisal for Blairingone Primary School, Perth and Kinross Council undertook a robust process of consultation work and consulted face to face with key stakeholders which allowed opportunities for parents, staff, pupils and the wider communities to consider and discuss the alternatives with the Council and provide valuable feedback to the Council on the aspects of the alternatives which were reasonable and not reasonable as well as the opportunity to explore other alternatives. This ensured the opportunity for any other alternatives or suggestions to be communicated to the Council in order that the Options Appraisal was comprehensive and inclusive of the key stakeholders' views. This also ensured further opportunity to provide representation of any other alternatives providing the Council with confidence that the Options Appraisals and assessment of alternatives was robust and comprehensive. The statutory consultation process also provided an opportunity for consultees to suggest other alternatives to the proposal during the statutory consultation process. One alternative option was notified to the Council during this process for a shared headship to be implemented between Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School. Consideration of this option is addressed in Section 8.

## 5. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 5.1 On 16 May 2018, Lifelong Learning Committee considered the [options appraisal](#) for Blairingone Primary School and agreed to commence formal consultation on a proposal to close Blairingone Primary School ([Report No 18/155 refers](#)) in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 5.2 An electronic link to the Proposal Paper was issued by letter on 23 August 2018 to those individuals and bodies listed under Distribution within the document. The Proposal Paper was also published on the Council's website: [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)
- 5.3 The Proposal Paper made clear to consultees that the consultation period would run from Monday 27 August 2018 until Friday 5 October 2018 – a period of at least 30 school days.
- 5.4 The proposal on which consultation took place was that:
  - Provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter;



- The pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- The delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.

5.5 The requirements for consulting on a relevant proposal relating to schools are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

- A Proposal Paper was published on Monday 27 August 2018. All statutory consultees were written to providing a link to the proposal paper and details of where and how to obtain a paper copy. A copy of this document was available free of charge to the consultees listed within the document.
- The Proposal Paper was published on the Perth and Kinross Council website [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk) and was available in paper copy upon request.
- An advertisement ran in the Courier and Advertiser and the Perthshire Advertiser on 27 August 2018.
- Two public meetings were held to discuss the proposal on Thursday 6 September 2018 and Tuesday 18 September 2018.
- The Consultation period ended on Friday 5 October 2018.
- Education Scotland's involvement consisted of: the options appraisal and proposal paper documents being sent to them, and visits to the sites of both Fossoway and Blairingone Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees. They also received a copy of all written representations and the minute of the public meeting. They then prepared a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. This is attached as Appendix 5.

5.6 The following schools are affected by the proposal:

- Blairingone Primary School
- Fossoway Primary School

5.7 In accordance with statutory requirements and good practice, the following persons were consulted:

- The Parent Council of the affected schools
- The parents of the pupils and children at the affected schools
- The parents of children expected to attend the affected schools within 2 years of the date of publication of this proposal document
- The pupils at the affected schools
- The teaching and ancillary staff at the affected schools
- The trade union and professional association representatives of the above staff
- The Community Council
- Relevant users of the affected schools
- Elected Members of Perth and Kinross Council
- Lay Members of Lifelong Learning Committee
- The Constituency MSPs and List MSPs covering the Constituency
- The Constituency MP
- The Executive Director, Housing & Environment, Perth and Kinross Council
- Tayside Contracts

- LiveActive Leisure
- Education Scotland

- 5.8 The number of letters issued with details of the Proposal Paper was 231.
- 5.9 During the consultation period, representations were sought from interested parties, either in oral or written form or electronically. A generic email account was set up by the Council to receive representations and enquiries on the proposal.
- 5.10 This Consultation Report is the Council's response to the issues raised during the consultation period on the Proposal Paper.
- 5.11 This Consultation Report was published on the Council's website for a period of no less than 3 weeks prior to final consideration by Lifelong Learning Committee on 27 March 2019.

## **6. THE PUBLIC MEETINGS**

- 6.1 A public meeting was held in Fossoway Primary School on Thursday 6 September 2018. No members of the public attended. A full note of the meeting is attached as Appendix 1 which details the questions and issues raised at the meeting.
- 6.2 A public meeting was held in Blairingone Primary School on Tuesday 18 September 2018. This meeting was attended by 12 members of the public. A full note of the meeting is attached as Appendix 2 which details the questions and issues raised at the meeting.

## **7. RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

- 7.1 In all, 5 online response forms were received. One response agreed with the Council's proposal and four responses disagreed with the Council's proposal. Seven written representations were received. This represents 6 individuals as one person submitted 2 written responses. All 7 written representations did not agree with the Council's proposal. One parent established an online change.org petition titled "Save our Rural School, Blairingone Primary School which obtained 374 signatures. Nine signatures were identified as Blairingone or Fossoway residents.

The details of the respondents are contained within the Summary of Consultation Responses, attached as Appendix 3.

- 7.2 In summary, the oral and written responses and questions can be grouped broadly as follows:
- House building projections, the impact on projected pupil rolls, predictions of what the housing market will be in Blairingone and affordable housing planned for Crook of Devon and future growth of the community.
  - Consideration of a joint Headship as an interim position until the house building position is known.
  - School transport, road safety and whether transport costs had been factored into the proposed savings.

- Whether a nursery and/or Out of School Care Club would increase pupil numbers and how the data for pre-school pupils is obtained.
- The capacity of Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School and what would happen if there was an influx of pupils.
- What would happen to staff if Blairingone Primary School was to close and whether Blairingone Primary School would be sold.
- Why the school has not been maintained over past years.
- The calculation of proposed savings if the proposal was to be implemented.
- The process for consulting with pupils at Blairingone Primary School.
- The reason for the proposed date of closure and why the decision to defer the report on Blairingone Primary School was taken in March 2018.
- When the outcome of the consultation would be reported back to Committee and the process involving Education Scotland.
- It is not the best use of limited resources to keep schools such as Blairingone open. Council tax payers should not fund a school for a handful of pupils.
- The catchment area should be reviewed to include Powmill.
- The nurturing educational experience provided at Blairingone and larger schools do not suit all pupils. Blairingone received very high ratings from its most recent HM Inspection report (Sept 2013).
- Blairingone Primary is the last remaining community building in the village. and the relationship Blairingone Primary School has with the local Nursing Home.

7.3 In summary, 231 letters were issued inviting comments and participation in the consultation. Five online submissions and 7 written responses were received in respect of the consultation.

7.4 Specific consultation meetings took place with pupils and staff at both Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School and full details of these is attached as Appendix 4.

## 8. EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO WRITTEN AND ORAL REPRESENTATIONS

8.1 **Clarification was sought regarding the proposed date that Fossoway catchment would subsume Blairingone catchment. Would it not be better to make the change on the first day of the school year rather than the 1 July 2019?**

The date refers to the last day of the school session in 2019. When a new pupil moves to an area they need to have an identified catchment school. If a new pupil(s) were to move into the area over the summer break this would mean that they would be without a catchment school until the new school session in August, whereas using 1 July 2019 as the date ensures this does not occur.

8.2 **Clarification was sought regarding when a report to Lifelong Learning Committee on the results of the statutory consultation would be considered.**

The indicative timescale is that it is intended to report back to Committee in March 2019.

8.3 **Clarification was sought on when looking at the cost implications, did the Council take into account the transport of pupils.**

Yes the cost implications of pupil transport were considered. This is detailed in the financial information in the options appraisal.

**8.4 Clarification was sought to establish if a decision could be delayed to see if planned housebuilding takes place and whether, as an interim measure, could the Council consider a joint Headship as there is developer interest in Blairingone.**

The Lifelong Learning Committee approved that statutory consultation was to be undertaken on the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School.

The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Lifelong Learning Committee which will include details of all representations made during the consultation period. The Lifelong Learning Committee will consider the representations and other facts, including Education Scotland's full report, and will make a decision on whether or not to proceed with implementing the proposal.

While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades. To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone. If all houses in the HLA were to build in the 5 year period from 2020 to 2025 there may be up to 5 additional children up to 2025. Whilst the maximum number of potential pupils expected from these sites may be up to 5 pupils in the 5 year period 2020 to 2025, there is no evidence that confirms that these sites will proceed. In addition, out of the 5 small sites detailed in the options appraisals only 3 of these sites now remain in the Housing Land Audit (HLA). There are planning applications for 3 houses but no indication if these will go ahead.

Perth and Kinross Council operates shared headships across a number of schools. The Council considers shared headship in particular circumstances when recruitment difficulties are experienced.

The policy for Cluster Headship was approved by Lifelong Learning Committee on 3 November 2010 following an evaluation of a 2 year pilot of shared headships. The approved model for Cluster Headships set out the circumstances in which a Cluster Headship would be considered. These circumstances are where a vacancy has arisen for a Headteacher post in a school with a P1-P7 roll of fewer than 120 pupils and where it has not been possible to recruit a replacement Headteacher through the normal recruitment process. The approved Cluster Headship model should not be implemented across schools where there are existing Headteachers employed. The model would not permit the removal of an existing Headteacher to be replaced with the appointment of a principal teacher to create a Cluster Headship where normal recruitment and fair selection processes have not been carried out.

As both Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School currently have appointed headteachers in post, these schools would not be considered for a Cluster Headship. This would only be a consideration if either of the posts became vacant and, following the Council's recruitment and fair selection process, it was not possible to recruit a replacement headteacher to fill the vacancy.

Whilst a shared headship may provide a means of improving cost effectiveness, it does not address the wider population issues within the Blairingone area or the issue of a

declining school roll as the result of placing requests being made for pupil to attend other schools.

**8.5 Clarification was sought in terms of process, regarding whether the Education Scotland report comes back to Lifelong Learning Committee before a decision is made.**

The outcome of the statutory consultation, including Education Scotland's full report, will be reported back to Lifelong Learning Committee for consideration on whether or not to implement the proposal.

**8.6 Clarification was sought regarding if Education Scotland raised significant issues with the proposal could Lifelong Learning Committee put a stop to the proposal.**

The Council would have to address any issues identified by Education Scotland or specify if they could not. If there were significant concerns that could not be addressed then this would be reflected in the Council's recommendation to Lifelong Learning Committee. Elected Members would have to be satisfied with how any findings would be addressed.

**8.7 A comment was made that the idea of joint Headship only arose after the original options appraisal was conducted. Due to uncertainty regarding housebuilding in the area it is considered this would make a good interim measure.**

**Housebuilding projections are contested for Fossoway and Blairingone because of what is known about development. The interim argument is a good one. If the development does not happen then the school can still be closed and, if not, then the building can be retained as a community asset. The option of shared headship should be explored in this case.**

The situation regarding housebuilding is not considered to be uncertain. While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades.

To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone but the Council is in the process of providing a response to a pre-application consultation for residential development on site MU74. The planning consent for the allocated site on the former Gartwhinzean Hotel in Powmill has lapsed. Through the Local Development Plan process Education and Children's Service are provided, by the Planning Service, with up to date information on existing housing land allocations, proposed housing land allocations, expected house building rates, housing completion rates, Housing Building Industry projections for sites, current planning applications and approved planning consents which is used to inform future school roll projections. Site MU74 which is covered by the proposed masterplan for Blairingone village has been considered through this process.

Perth and Kinross Council operates shared headships across a number of schools. The Council considers shared headship in particular circumstances when recruitment difficulties are experienced.

The policy for Cluster Headship was approved by Lifelong Learning Committee on

3 November 2010 following an evaluation of a 2 year pilot of shared headships. The approved model for Cluster Headships set out the circumstances in which a Cluster Headship would be considered. These circumstances are where a vacancy has arisen for a Headteacher post in a school with a P1-P7 roll of fewer than 120 pupils and where it has not been possible to recruit a replacement Headteacher through the normal recruitment process. The approved Cluster Headship model should not be implemented across schools where there are existing Headteachers employed. The model would not permit the removal of an existing Headteacher to be replaced with the appointment of a principal teacher to create a Cluster Headship where normal recruitment and fair selection processes have not been carried out.

As both Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School currently have appointed headteachers in post, these schools would not be considered for a Cluster Headship. This would only be a consideration if either of the posts became vacant and, following the Council's recruitment and fair selection process, it was not possible to recruit a replacement headteacher to fill the vacancy.

Whilst a shared headship may provide a means of improving cost effectiveness, it does not address the wider population issues within the Blairingone area or the issue of a declining school roll as the result of placing requests being made for pupil to attend other schools.

**8.8 A comment was made that LDP2 is limited to 30 houses, but the pre-application discussion was completely different. Developers pitched it that way because of the Tayplan. Also there is more affordable housing planned for the Crook of Devon. Is the Council aware of all that in the projections?**

The Council has looked at potential housebuilding and potential impact. Education and Children's Services has worked closely with colleagues in Planning to inform the options appraisal.

The Proposed Local Development Plan 2 identifies land at Blairingone under reference MU74 for a mixed use development including residential with a limit of 30 residential dwellings up to 2028. While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades.

To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone but the Council is in the process of providing a response to a pre-application consultation for residential development on site MU74. Pre-application discussions allow for a landowner/developer to receive advice from the Planning Authority as to the suitability of a proposal in terms of adopted planning policy in advance of a planning application being submitted. It does not provide a guarantee that an application will be submitted or a proposal will be progressed on the ground. The planning consent for the allocated site on the former Gartwhinzean Hotel in Powmill has lapsed.

Through the Local Development Plan process Education and Children's Services are provided, by the Planning Service, with up to date information on existing housing land allocations, proposed housing land allocations, expected house building rates, housing completion rates, Housing Building Industry projections for sites, current planning applications and approved planning consents which is used to inform future school roll

projections. Site MU74 which is covered by the proposed masterplan for Blairingone village has been considered through this process.

**8.9 Clarification was sought regarding whether the Council honour any comments made before the public meeting.**

All comments submitted from the 27 August 2018 will be formally recorded as part of the statutory consultation. Any comments regarding Blairingone Primary School made before the Council had agreed to commence statutory consultation on a formal proposal, will have to be submitted as part of the consultation.

**8.10 Clarification was sought regarding why in March the decision of Lifelong Learning Committee was different.**

Lifelong Learning Committee did not proceed with considering the report on Blairingone in March due to Elected Members deciding that they wished to seek confirmed information on the Local Development Plan. This was to clarify what impact there would be in the community regarding housing development.

**8.11 A query was raised regarding how can the Council predict what the housing market in Blairingone will look like.**

It is difficult to be exact but evidence from similar locations suggests that the build rate would be slow (5 per year) due to its rural location. Sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in the area of Blairingone has been shown to be weak over the past few decades. This evidence of the market demand in the Blairingone area over a prolonged period of time provides the Council with an evidence base on which to make its projections.

**8.12 A query was raised regarding childcare and whether Nursery or Out Of School Care would save the school.**

According to the figures and what is known of the demographics in the area, the number of pre-school pupils living in Blairingone is very low. The data received from the NHS is anonymous by postcode area and exact pupil numbers who will attend each school cannot be confirmed until they register for school as a number of parents do not send their children to their catchment school. However, this is reliable data providing information on the number of children under 5 years old in the Blairingone area.

In planning for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) as outlined in the Scottish Government's Blueprint for 2020, Perth and Kinross Council has arranged ELC into geographical areas. The [Perth and Kinross Council Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Expansion Plan](#) articulates the planned delivery models of 1140 hours ELC in Perth and Kinross and ensures that within localities there is a range of options for parents/carers to access funded ELC. This will include partner provider nurseries, childminders and a number of local authority settings offering all year round provision and longer opening hours. The ELC options available will be influenced by further consultation with parents/carers in localities.

The expansion of ELC to 1140 hours requires significant changes to how ELC is currently delivered within PKC. There is an opportunity to deliver flexible, affordable and most importantly, high quality ELC for children, which supports more parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment

and out of poverty. [Eleven distinct “Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Community Groups”](#) have been developed to take account of the geographical spread of localities across Perth and Kinross.

Specifically, Blairingone falls into the Kinross area where, by 2020, 1140 hours will be available at 3 Partner Providers, 3 Local Authority Nurseries offering term time places and 1 offering an extended year model. Each community group in Perth and Kinross will contain a “mixed economy” of provisions to deliver 1140 hours of ELC made up of local authority settings, partner providers and childminders. Therefore, the overall demand for nursery places within Blairingone can be met by the number of places available within the Kinross ELC community group.

The figures for the number of children under 5 years old in the Blairingone area lead the Council to conclude that there are insufficient numbers of children in the area to sustain nursery provision or out of school care. The number of children under the age of 5 years old are too low and, therefore, it is not considered to be the case that a nursery will attract families into the catchment area to then remain at the school. The fundamental issue is the low numbers of children under 5 years old in the catchment area.

**8.13 A query was raised in respect of the work undertaken to seek the views of parents about increasing the catchment area. Aside from NHS data, how do the Council get figures for pre-school pupils as no-one known to them was asked their views?**

An individual email was sent directly to all parents living in the identified area and to the local private nursery to identify potential pre-school pupils who could attend Blairingone Primary School if the catchment area was extended, to which the Council received 4 responses. The Council undertook this work as robustly as it could in terms of the limitations in access to data in identifying potential pre-school pupils who are not known to the Council or the local private nursery.

**8.14 A query was raised regarding whether this is all informed guess work. All that is needed is 5 or 6 more children to have the school at full capacity.**

The capacity of Blairingone Primary School is 25 pupils. The current number of pupils is 5. There are 8 pupils living in the catchment area who attend other Perth and Kinross schools. There are 5 pupils living in the catchment area who attend school outwith Perth and Kinross.

Projecting future pupil numbers is not guesswork although it is not an exact science. Future pupil projections have been considered using aggregated GP registration data from the NHS and both Fossoway Primary School and Blairingone Primary School pupil numbers are projected to remain static over the next 4 years.

In considering future pupil projections, a range of data sources is used to evidence and predict pupil population trends. One of the methodologies for projecting pupil numbers is based on the average intake of pupils in each school across the previous 5 year period. This provides a baseline of pupil projections for a 7 year period within Perth and Kinross which has provided pupil projections within an accuracy tolerance of within 1%. Demographic information on general population data provides actual and trend evidence across all age groups within the defined demographic zone. Projected pupil growth from housebuilding is also considered and there is no planned housebuilding within the catchment area for Blairingone Primary School and this



evidence leads the Council to the conclusion that there will be no increase in pupil population through housebuilding. Experience evidences that his data is largely accurate and provides the Council with a stable basis on which to make informed projections across all schools in Perth and Kinross.

There are very low numbers of children under 5 years old in the Blairingone catchment area over the next 4 years. Pupil projections in the catchment area do not indicate that the potential pupil numbers will increase in the future and there is no suggestion going forward that this is likely to change. The data for Blairingone shows that the number of children eligible to start school over the period 2019 – 2021 is 9 pupils.

However, based on the pattern of placing requests made for other schools by parents living in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area, the number of pupils enrolling for school in Perth and Kinross is likely to be lower.

**8.15 Clarification was sought regarding what is the capacity at Fossoway Primary School and what would happen if an influx of new pupils want to enrol in the next few years.**

There is space within Fossoway Primary School to accommodate Blairingone pupils. Fossoway Primary School had 111 pupils as at September 2018 and the capacity of the school is 150 pupils. The current forecast pupil roll for 2022 is 117 pupils. Therefore, it is unlikely that the school will reach capacity based on those projections and previous patterns of placing requests.

**8.16 A query was raised regarding what would happen if Fossoway Primary School reaches full capacity.**

This is very unlikely; the projected pupils from all planned house building have been taken into consideration and can be accommodated within the capacity of Fossoway Primary School.

**8.17 A query was raised regarding why a Quality Improvement Officer was asking the children questions as most children found it very upsetting.**

Consultation with pupils is a requirement as part of the statutory consultation process. The Council is very happy to share the questions that the children were asked and the process followed and this is detailed in Appendix 4.

**8.18 Clarification was sought regarding possible redundancy of current staff if the decision is made to close Blairingone Primary School.**

No discussion regarding individual members of staff would be held during a public meeting. Staffing across all schools is fluid dependant on pupil numbers and, as part of the annual staffing exercise, teachers are regularly re-deployed to other schools. This would be the same for Blairingone Primary School if the proposal was to be implemented.

**8.19 Clarification was sought regarding why the school hasn't been maintained over the last few years.**

The school is graded as category B for both condition and suitability. The suitability and condition of the school is not a factor leading to this consultation as both the condition and suitability of the school are considered satisfactory. Schools are maintained. Councils have a finite budget and not every school is maintained to the same degree on a yearly basis. It is a much wider maintenance programme and

priorities have to be identified across the whole of the school estate within the budget available.

- 8.20 **A comment was made that the savings identified in the report are not correct and are overstated, as staff costs have been included but the Council had confirmed no staff would be made redundant so how can their salaries be included as a saving.**

The savings are correct and are not overstated. Each school has a budget allocated to it for staff costs and where staff transfer to another school, the budget would not move to the other school. Staff would be redeployed into vacant posts within the Council. If a school had no staff employed, then the budget for that school would no longer be required regardless of whether the staff had moved to a new school location as the staff costs would then be met from the budget for the school they were employed in.

- 8.21 **Clarification was sought on whether the school will be sold.**

Every consideration would be taken into account before the building would be put up for sale in the event of the proposal being implemented. If the proposal to permanently close Blairingone Primary School is approved, it is envisaged that Education and Children's services would declare the building surplus to the requirements of Perth and Kinross Council. This would provide an opportunity for the building to be sold, leased or could present the local community with an opportunity for alternative uses of the building as part of a Community Asset Transfer.

- 8.22 **Clarification was sought on whether Education and Children's Services was aware of progress made to date in promoting the mixed-use development opportunity at Blairingone and the intention to bring forward a formal application for planning permission in principle within reasonable timescales and the potential for future house building in Blairingone, Crook of Devon and Powmill and the implications upon education provision within the local area**

Education and Children's Services is a key consultee through the delivery of the adopted Local Development Plan and the Proposed Local Development Plan 2.

Through the Local Development Plan process Education and Children's Service are provided, by the Planning Service, with up to date information on existing housing land allocations, proposed housing land allocations, expected house building rates, housing completion rates, Housing Building Industry projections for sites, current planning applications and approved planning consents which is used to inform future school roll projections.

This data is continually reviewed through ongoing liaison between the Planning Service and Education and Children's Services. The current position regarding the housing allocations and projected timescales for delivery of sites at Blairingone, Crook of Devon and Powmill have been taken into account through assessment of the implications upon education provision within the local area.

- 8.23 **A comment was made regarding the invaluable relationship between Blairingone Primary School and the benefit to service users at the care home at Rumbling Bridge.**

If the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School was to be implemented, there is no reason why this relationship could not continue with pupils attending Fossoway Primary School. The proposal includes the catchment area serving Blairingone to be included within the catchment area for Fossoway and, therefore, the intergenerational work which is currently taking place would be considered as part of any transition of

pupils and activities undertaken at Blairingone Primary School should these pupils move to Fossoway Primary School.

**8.24 A comment was made that the pupils at Blairingone Primary School should have a say in the decision of the future of the school.**

Pupils at both Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School have been consulted on the proposal and have had their views gathered as part of the consultation process.

**8.25 A comment was made regarding the transportation of pupils on a bus at a young age.**

Perth and Kinross Council currently transports in excess of 800 primary school pupils to and from school each day in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. The travel distance and travel time between Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School is not considered to be unreasonable. It is not uncommon for pupils to travel greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school and travelling for primary school education is common across Perth & Kinross because of the geography of the area. A number of pupils from Blairingone already travel to Fossoway Primary School by choice as the result of successful placing requests and for nursery provision.

**8.26 A comment was made that the nursery and P1 pupils are all in the same class at Fossoway Primary School and it is not felt that this is good for the children.**

Curriculum for Excellence is structured into four levels, early level spans across Nursery and Primary One. The focus at this level is learning through play and this would be seen as good practice, not detrimental to children's development. Planning in this way would aid transition from Nursery to Primary One and provide continuity of learning experiences while providing the right amount of support and challenge.

**8.27 A comment was made that pupils from Powmill should be provided with transport which may attract more pupils to Blairingone Primary School.**

Free home to school transport is provided in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. The Council does not provide free transport for pupils to attend a school which is not their catchment school. As part of the work which was undertaken in assessing the options for Blairingone Primary School, consideration was given to whether the catchment area serving Blairingone Primary School could be extended to include the area of Powmill.

The area to the east of Blairingone as far as Powmill was identified as a potential extension to the catchment area, as it is the only area of Perth and Kinross that borders Blairingone Primary School's current catchment area. The maximum number of primary school pupils who could attend Blairingone Primary School currently from this area is 15. There are fewer than 5 children living in this area under the age of 5.

A survey was compiled to consult with parents/carers living in Powmill to determine if they were supportive of an option for the catchment area of Blairingone Primary School to be expanded. Only 4 parents responded and 3 out of these 4 parents indicated that they would not send their children to Blairingone Primary School if the catchment was changed.

- 8.28 **A comment was made that there is a need to look at ways to develop and stimulate the community including prioritising and encouraging house building and rural development and a view that if the school was to close, this may threaten the potential for future house building in the area. It should be noted that there has been a lot of interest in developing housing in Blairingone area.** The Local Development Plan strategy supports rural development but housing delivery is driven by the housing market.

The closure of the local school may make a housing site in Blairingone site less attractive to the housing market but this is only one of many factors which influence housing delivery. Importantly, there is a school in Blairingone currently and that has not encouraged any housebuilding development in the area in the past few decades. While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades. To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone but the Council is in the process of providing a response to a pre-application consultation for residential development.

- 8.29 **A comment was made that Blairingone Primary School provides a nurturing educational experience for its pupils. Larger schools do not suit all pupils in meeting the individual needs of pupils.** All schools are responsible for meeting the needs of individual children in their care. In larger schools there is a wide range of skill set across teachers and support staff that can be of benefit to meeting the individual needs of children.

- 8.30 **A comment was made that Fossoway Primary School cannot cope with any more pupils and the volume of traffic at the school.** The capacity of Fossoway Primary School is 150 pupils and the school roll at Census 2018 was 111 pupils. The current forecast pupil roll for 2022 is 117 pupils. Therefore, there is more than sufficient capacity within Fossoway Primary School. There are no current concerns regarding the volume of traffic at Fossoway Primary School and parents, staff and children did not have any concerns about potential increase in the volume of traffic and impact on safety if the proposal proceeds when meeting with Education Scotland.

- 8.31 **A comment was made that Blairingone Primary School is the last remaining community building in the village.** It is recognised that there are no other facilities or services in Blairingone other than the primary school. Although the school is described as important to the community, a large number of pupils attend alternative primary schools. With the exception of Community Council meetings, there have been no regular lets of the school in recent years by the community. This indicates that the community does not rely on the school as a public/community facility at present. There is a Village Hall in nearby Crook of Devon and Fossoway Primary School is available for lets. The Blairingone community require to travel to access most services due to a lack of amenities within the village. This is facilitated by the fact that the village is situated on the main A977 trunk road. Many other communities in rural Perth and Kinross travel significantly further distances on more minor roads to access services.

8.32 **A comment was made that it is the lack of pre-school and after school provision which are the greatest barriers to families enrolling their children at Blairingone Primary School. The recent closure of a private nursery in Powmill supports the need for enhanced nursery provision and this could be made available at Blairingone.**

In planning for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) as outlined in the Scottish Government's Blueprint for 2020, Perth and Kinross Council has arranged ELC into geographical areas. The [Perth and Kinross Council Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Expansion Plan](#) articulates the planned delivery models of 1140 hours ELC in Perth and Kinross and ensures that within localities there is a range of options for parents/carers to access funded ELC.

This will include partner provider nurseries, childminders and a number of local authority settings offering a "mixed economy" of provision including, in some settings, all year round provision and longer opening hours. The ELC options available will be influenced by further consultation with parents/carers in localities and available resources.

The expansion of ELC to 1140 hours requires significant changes to how ELC is currently delivered within PKC. There is an opportunity to deliver flexible, affordable and most importantly, high quality ELC for children, which supports more parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty. [Eleven distinct "Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Community Groups"](#) have been developed to take account of the geographical spread of localities across Perth and Kinross.

Specifically, Blairingone falls into the Kinross ELC community group where, by 2020, 1140 hours will be available at 3 Partner Providers, 3 Local Authority Nurseries offering term time places and 1 offering an extended year model. Each community group in Perth and Kinross will contain a "mixed economy" of provisions to deliver 1140 hours of ELC made up of local authority settings, partner providers and childminders. Therefore, the overall demand for nursery places within Blairingone can be met by the number of places available within the Kinross ELC community group.

In respect of provision of out of school care to be established at Blairingone Primary School, there is a national review of Out of School Care underway as part of the Scottish Government's National Framework for Out of School Care and Perth and Kinross Council will be taking cognisance of national developments in this area in considering future requirements.

The Childcare Strategy Team support parents and volunteers to explore a range of childcare models and options within communities. Out of School Care is not a statutory service and is not something which the Council would be able to set up or manage. The Childcare Strategy Team can provide support to set up a sustainable childcare service in terms of advice, guidance and training for committees or staff.

There is no evidence to indicate that lack of nursery provision is a barrier to attending Blairingone Primary School. Parents choose ELC provision based on a variety of factors, and provision of ELC within a school would not suit all parents. The figures for the number of children under 5 years old in the Blairingone area lead the Council to conclude that there are insufficient numbers of children in the area to sustain nursery

provision or out of school care. The number of children under the age of 5 years old are too low and, therefore, it is not considered to be the case that a nursery will attract families into the catchment area to then remain at the school. The fundamental issue is the low numbers of children under 5 years old in the catchment area.

- 8.33 **A comment was made that it is felt that the educational benefits of pupils remaining at Blairingone are just as strong, if not stronger, as the arguments for moving them.**

It is in no way being suggested that Blairingone Primary School does not provide a good quality education for pupils who attend the school. The educational benefits which have been set out identify what the potential benefits could be for pupils in attending a larger school with mixed sex classes at all stages in the school, including nursery.

This allows all children to participate in peer support, classroom learning, and learning groups across stages and between classes, with the benefit of allowing children to have a wide and varied range of learning experiences affording opportunities for children at all stages to widen their social and educational experiences.

- 8.34 **A comment was made that as a council tax payer in Perth & Kinross, I feel very strongly that it is not best use of limited resources to keep schools such as this open. It is not in any way remote, being sited on a main road, and is only a short distance from an excellent school, Fossoway Primary School. I understand that the school is NOT used by the community at the moment, so it is ludicrous to suggest that PKC should keep it open for this reason. Why should council tax payers fund a school for a handful of pupils?**

The comment is noted.

- 8.35 **A comment was made that the proposal paper refers to static projections for pupil numbers at both Blairingone and Fossoway Primary Schools. Proposed housebuilding has been disregarded based on past trends and is not included in the future projected rolls. Developer interest in Blairingone, Crook of Devon and Powmill is significant Developers are in discussion with the Council for a zoned site with a median capacity for up to 95 houses that there is definite interest in. There is support for a masterplan approach in Blairingone that includes the provision of sports facilities adjacent to the current school. The outcome of the masterplan for the village should be concluded before a decision is made on Blairingone Primary School.**

The Proposed Local Development Plan 2 identifies land at Blairingone under reference MU74 for a mixed use development including residential with a limit of 30 residential dwellings up to 2028. While sites in this area are being promoted by interested Land Owners, sites need the support of the development industry to ensure the delivery of houses. The key elements in site delivery are financial viability and market demand. The market demand in this area has been shown to be weak over the past few decades.

To date no planning application has been submitted for housing proposals at Blairingone but the Council is in the process of providing a response to a pre-application consultation for residential development on site MU74. Pre-application discussions allow for a landowner/developer to receive advice from the Planning Authority as to the suitability of a proposal in terms of adopted planning policy in advance of a planning application being submitted. It does not provide a guarantee that an application will be submitted or a proposal will be progressed on the ground.

The planning consent for the allocated site on the former Gartwhinzean Hotel in Powmill has lapsed.

Through the Local Development Plan process Education and Children's Service are provided, by the Planning Service, with up to date information on existing housing land allocations, proposed housing land allocations, expected house building rates, housing completion rates, Housing Building Industry projections for sites, current planning applications and approved planning consents. This is used to inform future school roll projections. Site MU74 which is covered by the proposed masterplan for Blairingone village has been considered through this process.

**8.36 A comment was made that pupils being transported to school is not supported, if it can be avoided. Concern was raised regarding the transporting of pupils along the A977 to Fossoway as this road carries the highest number of heavy goods vehicles within Perth and Kinross and the conditions during winter.**

Perth and Kinross Council provides home to school transport for more than 4000 pupils daily to schools across the whole Council area. It should be noted that pupils attending Kinross High School and Fossoway Primary School already travel daily to and from school on school transport along the A977 without incident. A number of pupils from Blairingone already travel to Fossoway Primary School by choice as the result of successful placing requests and travel along the A977.

It is recognised that adverse weather in the winter can impact on travel arrangements across Perth and Kinross. It is not unusual for pupils travelling to primary schools to be affected by severe weather. Headteachers take into account the local circumstances when deciding to close the school and/or send pupils home early. All schools in Perth and Kinross have an emergency closure plan for severe weather in place which is drawn up by the Headteacher following a risk assessment and in consultation with school transport operators.

**8.37 A comment was made regarding why Cleish Primary School catchment has not been considered when it is as close to Blairingone as Fossoway is.**

The shortest travel time by road from Cleish Primary School to Blairingone Primary School is approximately 14 minutes. This route passes Fossoway Primary School. The travel time by road from Fossoway Primary School to Blairingone Primary School is approximately 9 minutes.

The majority of primary school age pupils living in the Cleish Primary School catchment area live to the east of Cleish Primary School. These pupils would have to travel past Cleish Primary School to attend Blairingone Primary School. This would be an increase in travel distance and time to their closest primary school.

## **9. EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT**

9.1 In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.

9.2 The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to close Blairingone Primary School.

9.3 Education Scotland visited Fossoway and Blairingone Primary Schools the week commencing 22 October 2018 to speak to relevant consultees. Education Scotland

attended the public meetings held on 6 September 2018 and 18 September 2018 in connection with the Council's proposals.

9.4 The Education Scotland report is reproduced in full (Appendix 5).

9.5 The report supports the proposal and is summarised below:

- Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to close Blairingone Primary School has clear educational benefits. Blairingone Primary School children currently enjoy learning in an inclusive and supportive environment.

However, Blairingone children will have access to greater learning opportunities, wider experiences and increased socialisation through being part of a larger school at Fossoway. Opportunities to engage in lunchtime, after school and team events will be increased. Projected numbers of children within the catchment are insufficient to make the school viable. A significant factor in this is parental placing requests to other schools. Fossoway Primary School has the capacity to accommodate additional children. The proposal will assist the council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources.

- Blairingone Primary School structure has one composite class across stages Primary 1-7. At the time of the HM Inspector's visit the class consisted of two P2s, one P3, one P6 and one P7. Children currently enjoy a positive and supportive learning environment. There is no physical education hall at Blairingone Primary School.
- Data suggests the roll of Blairingone Primary School has been falling over the last five years. Future projections indicate that pupil numbers are unlikely to increase above their current level. Out of 17 children who could attend the school, currently 12 attend neighbouring schools. If this pattern of parental choice continues, then the future sustainability of Blairingone is more challenging.
- Parents, children and staff from Blairingone Primary School who met with HM Inspectors did not support the proposal. Parents and staff did not agree that there would be any educational benefits for Blairingone children. Concerns were expressed about the perceived loss of the inclusive, supportive environment the children currently experience. Children enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. The small numbers make it easier for them to interact.
- Parents, including those who live in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area, children and staff from Fossoway Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They thought that engagement with a wider peer group at age and stage would improve children's learning.
- Parents from Fossoway Primary School thought children would benefit from access to a wider pool of staff including a full-time Pupil Support Teacher. Attending a larger school would better prepare children for the transition to secondary school. Parents thought the proposal would make better use of limited resources in a time of financial constraints. Fossoway children would welcome improved social opportunities and the chance to make new friends. They thought Blairingone children would benefit from having access to an increased range of physical



education activities and lunchtime clubs and opportunities to participate in inter-school team events.

- The council has clearly assessed the likely benefits to children and in doing so has given due consideration to any reasonable alternatives. Due to insufficient demand, coupled with parents choosing to place their children at other primary schools, none of the options bar closure were considered as viable or sustainable. The current school building is not used regularly for community activity. The proposal does not impact negatively on children at Fossoway Primary School. Blairingone children will be entitled to free transport. The journey time is not unreasonable when compared with other parts of the authority.

## 9.6 **Perth and Kinross Council's Response to Education Scotland's Report**

The Council welcomes the report from Education Scotland and accepts its findings and notes the concerns raised by pupils, parents and staff from Blairingone Primary School in response to the Council's proposal.

In response to the findings contained within the Education Scotland report, Perth and Kinross response is as follows:

### 9.6.1 **In taking forward the proposal the council should set out how it will ensure current Blairingone children are supported to positively make the transition to Fossoway School.**

The Local Authority has experience of supporting pupils to make a positive transition from one school to another. If the proposal was to be implemented, the schools would work together to ensure that children were familiar with their new school through visits to Fossoway Primary School. The staff from Fossoway Primary School would also visit Blairingone Primary School to get to know the children. Resources and important aspects of Blairingone Primary School would be taken to Fossoway Primary School so that there was still a link and a focus for discussion. All staff are experienced in making children feel welcome and helping to settle them into a new environment. Events would be held with parents at Fossoway Primary School to allow them to meet staff and become familiar with the school and the curriculum offered there. This approach has proved successful with a number of schools over recent years.

### 9.6.2 **It should also work with parents to address the concerns they raised such as bullying and travelling by bus.**

Perth and Kinross Council will continue to work with parents to address the concerns they have raised should the proposal be implemented. Individual meetings with parents would be offered to discuss any particular issues and address any concerns raised. Every school in Perth and Kinross has its own anti-bullying or positive behaviour management policy which underpins Perth & Kinross Council's Anti-Bullying Strategy. This clearly sets out how the school will deal with reported incidents of bullying and bullying behaviour and address any issues or concerns to ensure all pupils can benefit from learning environments which are free from intimidation, harassment and fear and where bullying behaviour is unacceptable.

Perth and Kinross is committed to working in partnership with parents, children and young people and other stakeholders to ensure that, wherever possible, all children enrolled in our schools receive an education that maximises their opportunity to achieve their potential. A positive ethos in our schools is fundamental to raising

achievement and links to the development of anti-bullying, peer support and other whole school strategies. It also encourages achievement, celebrates success, and results in lower exclusion rates and fewer discipline problems. It is important that schools, pupils and parents work together to create a positive ethos.

Perth and Kinross Council successfully transports more than 4000 primary and secondary pupils to and from school each day. The most appropriate and suitable transport is put in place dependent on the numbers of pupils to be transported and distances to be travelled. All home to school transport is arranged in accordance with legislative requirements.

### **9.6.3 The council should also consider how the vacant school might be used to the benefit of the local Blairingone community.**

Perth and Kinross Council will continue to engage with the local community regarding options for the future use of the Blairingone Primary School building should the proposal be implemented. The closure of the school could provide the community with an opportunity to use the building as a facility solely for community use.

If the proposal to permanently close Blairingone Primary School is approved, it is envisaged that Education and Children's services would declare the building surplus to the requirements of Perth and Kinross Council.

This would provide an opportunity for the building to be sold, leased or could present the local community with an opportunity for alternative uses of the building as part of a Community Asset Transfer.

## **10. RURAL SCHOOL – COMPLIANCE WITH SECTIONS 11A TO 13 OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

10.1 Blairingone Primary School is an accessible rural school, and the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 therefore requires the Education Authority to have special regard to the following factors:

- The likely effect on the local community as a consequence of the proposal; and
- The likely effect caused by different travelling arrangements that may be required.

### **10.2 Effect on the Local Community**

#### **Community Impact – Loss of the school**

10.2.1 The number of primary pupils attending the school has fallen. However, it seems to be the case that families who do live within the catchment area are more mobile and exercising their right to choose other schools for their children.

10.2.2 At the community engagement session there was much comment on the school being the only remaining amenity within the village. The community suggested that the lack of a school, transport and other amenities would deter families moving into the area. The data on pupil numbers would suggest however that there are families living in the area but that they are not attending the local school. It is clear that families living in the catchment area are travelling to access education as well as other services and so it appears to be an accepted part of life within the community.

10.2.3 In 2017, the Council closed schools in Calvine (Struan Primary School) and Enochdhu (Straloch Primary School) after they had been mothballed for 5 years. The evidence from both areas was that families were not deterred from moving into the area by having to travel to a neighbouring village. There are clear parallels with Blairingone in that the communities already travelled to other local communities to access services.

Neither school/community was as accessible as Blairingone, which has a main trunk road (A977) running through the village and is only approximately 10 miles from Kinross and approximately 3 miles to Dollar. Fossoway Primary School is approximately 4.5 miles away.

10.2.4 The evidence indicates that the evidence outlined in the paragraphs above are indicators of factors that will promote resilience within the community and, therefore, it is considered that there will be little effect on the sustainability of the community.

### **Community Impact - Use of the Building**

10.2.5 There are no other facilities or services in Blairingone other than the primary school. Although the school is described as important to the community, a large number of pupils attend alternative primary schools.

10.2.6 There are no other public buildings in Blairingone. However, with the exception of Community Council meetings, there have been no regular lets of the school in recent years by the community. This indicates that the community does not rely on the school as a public/community facility at present. There is a Village Hall in nearby Crook of Devon and Fossoway Primary School is available for lets.

10.2.7 The Blairingone community require to travel to access most services due to a lack of amenities within the village. This is facilitated by the fact that the village is situated on the main A977 trunk road. Many other communities in rural Perth and Kinross travel significantly further distances on more minor roads to access services.

10.2.8 The closure of the school would provide the community with an opportunity to use the building as a facility solely for community use. If the community do not use the school building upon closure, the Village Hall in Crook of Devon is approximately 4.5 miles from Blairingone accessed by a main road. Closure of the school would therefore have little impact on the existing arrangements of the community.

### **10.3 Travel Arrangements**

10.3.1 As Blairingone Primary School is a rural school, special regard was paid to the rural school factors. These were considered fully in the Options Appraisal stage and were a focus of the pre-consultation with the community.

10.3.2 The travel distance from Blairingone Primary School to Fossoway Primary School is approximately 4.5 miles with an approximate travel time of 9 minutes.

Currently the pupils attending Blairingone Primary School journey between approximately 0.2 miles and 2.7 miles to and from school. Moving to Fossoway Primary School would mean pupil journey distances increase to between 4.2 miles and 6.4 miles each way which is not an unreasonable travelling distance to get to school. Time spent

travelling on the bus would be approximately 27 minutes each way for the child who has to travel furthest. These timings factor in the stop and pick-up times to collect pupils.

10.3.3 If Blairingone Primary School was permanently closed, all children would be transported by the Council to Fossoway Primary School. The travel distance between Blairingone and Fossoway is not far and in other more rural parts of Perth and Kinross it is not uncommon for pupils to travel greater distances on more minor roads to reach their school. Taking this option forward would not adversely affect the travel arrangements for current pupils and future pupils are unlikely to have hugely different travel arrangements.

10.3.4 Travelling for primary school education is common across Perth & Kinross because of the geography of the area.

A number of pupils from Blairingone already travel to Fossoway Primary School by choice as the result of successful placing requests which is an indicator that many parents consider this to be a manageable travel distance for their children.

10.3.5 Staff in Perth and Kinross tend to travel throughout the area to work in schools. Many staff do not live within the catchment area of the school in which they work. A distance of 4.5 miles is a relatively short distance to travel in rural Perth and Kinross. It is therefore considered that there would be very limited impact on staff travelling arrangements.

10.3.6 As the school was not generally used by the community, there should be no impact on travelling arrangements for any other users of the school's facilities. In any event, the distance is relatively small and the local community is used to travelling to access other services such as GP and dental surgeries, shops and post offices.

#### 10.4 **Environmental Impact**

10.4.1 There are 5 pupils who already travel from the Blairingone Primary School catchment area to other schools in Perth and Kinross as the result of successful placing requests, for which there is an environmental impact. This would be offset by the requirement to run Blairingone Primary School as an operational building.

10.4.2 Pupils from Blairingone catchment area would be transported by the Council to Fossoway Primary School which reduces environmental impact as they would travel together rather than separately with parents.

10.4.3 The community already requires to travel to access other services such as GP and dental surgeries, shops, post offices and community facilities. Therefore there will be little environmental impact if Blairingone Primary School were to close.

### 11. **ALLEGED OMISSIONS OR INACCURACIES**

11.1 Section (10) (3) of the 2010 Act also places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission within the Proposal Paper which has either been identified by the Council or raised by consultees. This section of the 2010 Act also requires the Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or, if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.

11.2 In the course of the consultation exercise, there were no areas identified by respondents as being inaccurate or omitted from the Proposal Paper during the consultation period.

## **12. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

12.1 Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that: After the Education Authority has received Education Scotland's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to:

- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period;
- (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public Meeting; and
- (iii) Education Scotland's report.

12.2 Following receipt of the Education Scotland report, 5 online representations, 7 written representations and oral representations made at 2 public meetings held during the consultation period, officers reviewed the proposals.

12.3 The feedback from the consultation was considered by officers where all the questions and comments raised were considered in detail. Data and factual information was checked where required and advice and input was sought from other Council Services where needed to consider the issues raised. This ensured that the Council met the requirements to review the proposal under section 9(1) and 13(5) of the 2010 Act.

12.4 Officers of the Education Authority have listened carefully to the points made at the public meeting and have considered equally carefully the Education Scotland report and the online representations. The proposal was reviewed to consider whether any of the representations led to the Council to reconsider other options as being reasonable alternatives to the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School. In particular, careful consideration was given to the representations which had been made in respect of housebuilding projections. This was further discussed with Planning Officers and it is concluded that the original projections remain sound.

12.5 None of the representations led officers to conclude that any of these options should be reconsidered as reasonable alternatives.

12.6 The educational benefits were reviewed in respect of the Education Scotland report and representations made.

12.7 There were no factors included in the Education Scotland report or representations made requiring any aspect of the educational benefits to be reconsidered.

12.8 There were no aspects included in the representations made which provided a different conclusion in relation to the rural school factors.

12.9 Having reviewed the Education Scotland report and feedback from consultees, officers concluded that the basis of the original proposal continues to be the most appropriate response to the falling and unsustainable school roll of Blairingone Primary School.

12.10 It is considered that the proposal addresses the issue of the falling and unsustainable school roll and remains the best solution to ensure the children and parents of Blairingone Primary School will have access to an educational establishment which has a well-planned and committed approach to taking forward improvement. There is sufficient capacity at Fossoway Primary School to fully meet the needs of the Blairingone Primary School children without disrupting the learning of the Fossoway Primary School children.

**13. OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS IN TERMS OF SECTION 15(4) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010**

13.1 If the Education Authority makes a final decision to implement the proposal, it will require to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision, and provide them with a copy of the proposal document and consultation report. This must be done within six working days of that decision. The Scottish Ministers have an eight week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal.

13.2 Within the first three weeks of that eight week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the eight week call-in process is known, the Authority cannot proceed to implement the proposal.

13.3 If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, they must refer the proposal to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels who may refuse to consent to the proposal or grant their consent to the proposal subject to conditions or unconditionally.

13.4 Recipients of this Consultation Report, and other readers, should note that the legislation allows for any person to make representations to Scottish Ministers within three weeks of the Council taking their final decision to implement a closure proposal.

Perth and Kinross Council's Lifelong Learning Committee will take the decision on whether or not to implement this closure proposal at its meeting on 27 March 2019. If the decision is taken to implement the closure proposal, any representations to Scottish Ministers, therefore, in this context need to be with the Ministers within three weeks of this date. Therefore, any representations must be made to Scottish Ministers by 17 April 2019.

13.5 Anyone wishing to make representation to Scottish Ministers during the three week period referred to above should do so by email to [schoolestate@gov.scot](mailto:schoolestate@gov.scot) or in writing to:

School Infrastructure Unit  
The Scottish Government  
Area 2A (South)  
Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH  
EH6 6QQ

## **14. LEGAL ISSUES**

- 14.1 The Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 throughout this statutory consultation.
- 14.2 The Council is mindful of its duties in respect of equality and the Equality Impact Assessment did not identify that any parent, child or young person would be treated less favourably as a result of this proposal. Pupils would have access to a wider peer group of both sexes at Fossoway Primary School which is a positive impact.

In terms of Socio Economic Impact, the assessment identified that there may be a small disadvantage for some parents who would have further to travel when attending meetings or events in school. However, the identified benefits significantly outweigh any disadvantage. It is also not considered to be a significant disadvantage as parents are already travelling to access all other services outside Blairingone village. In addition, a number of pupils from Blairingone catchment area are already attending Fossoway Primary School as the result of successful placing requests. If the proposal is implemented, these pupils will be transported to Fossoway Primary School by the Council rather than travelling separately at a cost to the parents.

- 14.3 Under the terms of the Schools (Scotland) (Consultation) Act 2010, it is a legal requirement that the Council should not reach any formal decision without waiting until a period of three weeks starting on the day on which this Consultation Report is published in electronic and printed form has expired.
- 14.4 As it is the intention that this Consultation Report should be published, both electronically and in written form, if required, on 22 February 2019, this meets the statutory requirement to publish this report for more than three weeks before consideration of the proposal by Lifelong Learning Committee on 27 March 2019.

## **15. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 There may be staffing implications relating to the proposal if implemented. Where necessary, any aspect of the implementation of these proposals that impacts on staff will result in consultation with the relevant trade unions and the individuals concerned. Appropriate arrangements would be made for staff at Blairingone Primary School in planning and consultation should the proposal be implemented.

## **16. CONCLUSION**

- 16.1 The Council now has 4 broad options to consider, namely:
- (a) adopt the proposal;
  - (b) withdraw the proposal;
  - (c) amend the proposal in some way which allows the proposal to proceed; or
  - (d) amend the proposal significantly and undertake a further consultation exercise on a new proposal.
- 16.2 Education Scotland has identified that the proposal has clear educational benefits for young people. This includes the larger number and wider range of peers in Fossoway

Primary School. This allows children to access learning with groups of learners at all stages within a primary school and to develop their social and interpersonal skills in a broader range of appropriate contexts.

16.3 If the Council adopts the proposal, it is understood that the educational benefits set out in the Proposal Paper would materialise.

16.4 The key points that have been highlighted during the consultation period are as follows:

- The report from Education Scotland acknowledges that the proposal has clear educational benefits for pupils.

This includes the larger number and wider range of peers in Fossoway Primary School, which allows children to access a learning environment where there are groups of learners at all stages of school, further allowing them to develop their social and interpersonal skills in a broader range of appropriate contexts.

- The Council, having had special regard to the rural school factors, does not consider that the proposal will adversely affect the sustainability of the community. Indeed, there may be a positive opportunity for the Blairingone Primary School building to be used for community use if it ceases to be used as a school.
- Whilst the Council's proposals have generally not been supported by the parents/carers, staff and the wider community who responded to the proposal, the vast majority of those consulted have raised no issues or opposition to the proposal.
- The distance between the two schools is approximately 4.5 miles and a number of pupils are already making this journey attending Fossoway Primary School as the result of successful placing requests. Free home to school transport would be provided for all pupils from Blairingone catchment area to attend Fossoway primary School.

## **17. RECOMMENDATIONS**

17.1 On the basis of the feedback received and taking account of the educational and social benefits of the proposal, it is concluded that the following proposal is the most suitable option and it is recommended that the Council approves:

- The provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- The pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- The delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.

Sheena Devlin  
Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)





**Perth and Kinross Council  
Education & Children's Services  
Statutory Consultation Public Meeting**

**Minute of meeting held on Thursday 6 September 2018**

**7.00pm at Fossoway Primary School**

**Present**

Sharon Johnston	Head of Education – Early Years & Primary
Karen Robertson	Service Manager - Business Services
Councillor Caroline Shiers	Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee

**In Attendance**

Councillor Michael Barnacle	Perth and Kinross Council
Councillor Richard Watters	Perth and Kinross Council
Ken McAra	Education Scotland
Andrew Magee – Minute	Perth and Kinross Council

0 members of the public.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Councillor Shiers opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The panel members introduced themselves. Despite there being no members of the public, Council officers agreed to talk through the presentation for the benefit of those in attendance.

**2. Context for Statutory Consultation**

Sharon Johnston explained the background and context for the School Estate Review. The review stems from the Council's vision to make the best use of resources while optimising the educational experiences for pupils in Perth and Kinross. In November 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee agreed to include Blairingone Primary School in the review. For ease of reading, questions and comments are detailed at section 5 and 6 respectively.

**3. The Proposal**

Sharon Johnston explained the consultation proposal to the attendees:

The Council proposes that:

- Provision of a school at Blairingone Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 28 June 2019, or as soon as possible thereafter;

- That the pupils of Blairingone Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Fossoway Primary School, from 1 July 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; and
- That the delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.

#### **4. Presentations**

Sharon Johnston and Karen Robertson gave a presentation explaining the proposal in further detail.

Sharon Johnston outlined the process of review so far. Communities were encouraged to respond using a wide variety of mechanisms, including drop-in sessions, email as well as the availability of an online questionnaire. This information was presented to Lifelong Learning Committee on 16 May, who approved statutory consultation on the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School and this meeting is part of that process.

Sharon Johnston explained the details of Blairingone Primary School including, the capacity of the school, pupil roll and placing requests. Based on feedback gathered during the appraisal of options, the Council believes closure of Blairingone PS is likely to have minimal impact on the community.

Councillors Barnacle and Watters sought clarification of which authority Strathdevon Primary School was in. It was confirmed that the Dollar based school is in Clackmannanshire Council.

Sharon Johnston handed over to Karen Robertson who proceeded to detail the possible impact on travel for both pupils and the community of Blairingone. Pupils living in Blairingone would be eligible for free home-to-school transport and it is considered that there would likely be no significant impact for other community members, as the school is not used significantly by the wider community and community members already travel to access other services. Additionally, pupils who live in Blairingone but attend Fossoway as the result of placing requests would become eligible for free home-to-school transport.

Sharon Johnston went on to outline the educational benefits of Blairingone pupils attending Fossoway PS. Advantages include attending a school with a larger pupil roll, opportunities to work in learning groups across stages, a wider range of learning experiences and that the building itself is more suited to modern teaching methods. Sharon concluded that the children would have a good educational experience at Fossoway PS. An overview of comments from the community drop-in sessions was provided.

(Comment from Councillor Watters Re. educational benefits) “We are trying to give a value that is hard to put a cost to”.

Karen Robertson outlined the process of statutory consultation. She highlighted that the process is strictly determined by legislation to ensure thorough and robust process across authorities in Scotland. The legislation sets out how and when we must undertake certain activities. The process started with the consideration of Lifelong Learning Committee on 16 May which granted permission to undertake a statutory consultation. Karen Robertson emphasised that no decisions have been made. The Council must first seek the views of statutory consultees and report back to Committee with recommendations

The period of consultation will run from **Monday 27 August to Friday 5 October** which includes 30 school days. The purpose of this consultation is to seek representation from interested parties. The Council ensures these consultations are open to all, anyone who wishes to make views known to the Council can do so, and there are a number of ways they can do this, whether online or in person. Any representations are minuted and then published so that anyone who cannot attend public meetings can see the views which have been expressed.

At the end of the consultation period the Council is required to send the consultation documentation to Education Scotland, who then have 3 weeks to consider representations, visit affected schools and speak with staff, parents and pupils. The Council will then publish the consultation report which will include representations, Education Scotland's report and responses to any representations that were made. The report must be published for at least 3 weeks before a decision can be taken by the Lifelong Learning Committee which is likely to be March 2019. It was emphasised that these timescales are indicative and purposefully kept flexible should any part of the process require to be extended.

If the decision of Lifelong Learning Committee is to keep the school open then the Council cannot revisit the decision for 5 years. If the decision is made to close Blairingone Primary School then the Council would notify Scottish Ministers by the end of March 2019. Ministers then have 8 weeks to consider the Council's decision. Representations can be made in writing to Scottish Ministers during the first 3 weeks. If Ministers decide not to give consent to implement the proposal, then the decision could be referred to the School Closure Panel, who then have a further 16 weeks for consideration.

A discussion followed the presentations.

## **5. Questions**

### **Question 1**

(Regarding the proposed date that Fossoway catchment would subsume Blairingone catchment) Would it not be better to make the change on the first day of the school year rather than the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019?

- A.** The date refers to the last day of the school session in 2019. When a new pupil moves to an area they need to have an identified catchment school. If a new pupil(s) were to move into the area over the summer break this would mean that they would be without a catchment school until the new school session in August, where this date ensures there is no break.

### **Question 2**

When will you report to Lifelong Learning Committee on the results of the statutory consultation?

- A.** The timescale is indicative, but it is intended to report back to Committee in March 2019.

### **Question 3**

In looking at the cost implications, did you take into account the transport of pupils?

- A.** Yes. This is detailed in the financial information in the options appraisal.

#### **Question 4**

(Re. delaying a decision to see if planned housebuilding takes place) As an interim measure could we consider a joint Headship as there is developer interest in Blairingone?

- A.** As the options appraisal was developed, we asked for comments, and the options appraisal sets out all the community comments that were put forward and this informed the options that were considered. Any additional options will be recorded and considered as part of the statutory consultation.

#### **Question 5**

In terms of process, does the Education Scotland report then come back to Lifelong Learning Committee before a decision is made?

- A.** Yes. The outcome of the statutory consultation, including Education Scotland's report, will be reported back to Lifelong Learning Committee to make a decision on whether or not to implement the proposal. All that has been agreed is to commence formal consultation.

#### **Question 6**

If Education Scotland raised significant issues with the proposal could Lifelong Learning Committee put a stop to it (the proposal)?

- A.** Council officers would have to address any issues identified by Education Scotland or say if they could not. If there were significant concerns that could not be addressed then this would be reflected in the Council's recommendation to Lifelong Learning Committee. Elected Members would have to be satisfied with how any findings would be addressed.

### **6. Comments**

#### **Comment 1**

Could the lack of attendance by parents suggest that Fossoway parents are not concerned with the outcome either way? Blairingone parents are definitely concerned, they had representation at the Community Council meeting – (additional comment) the school is the only place to have meetings.

#### **Comment 2**

The idea of joint Headship only came to me after the original options appraisal was conducted. Due to uncertainty regarding housebuilding in the area I think this would make a good interim measure. I would contest the (housebuilding) projections for Fossoway and Blairingone because of what I know about development. The interim argument is a good one. If the development does not happen then you can still close the school and if not then you can retain the building as a community asset.

#### **Response**

The Council is required to consider any additional responses as part of the report and look at whether they are viable or not. Any alternative ideas are worthy of consideration and the Council will respond to those as part of the consultation process.

**Comment 3**

One of the problems with projections is, if you base it on current housing, then it will be a static situation – as opposed to using Local Development Plan 2. Over the last 20 years I have always wanted Blairingone to be a two teacher school. That is why I suggest the joint Headship – I don't know if this has been explored?

**Comment 4**

(Continued from above) LDP 2 is limited to 30 houses, but the pre-application discussion was completely different. Developers pitched it that way because of the Tayplan. Also there is more affordable housing planned for the Crook of Devon. Are you aware of all that in your projections?

**Response**

Yes. The Council has been looking at housebuilding and potential impact. We have been working closely with colleagues in Planning to inform the options appraisal.

**Comment 5**

I am not happy with the turn out.

Sharon Johnston thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.



Education &  
Children's Services

**Perth & Kinross Council  
Education and Children's Services  
Statutory Consultation Public Meeting**

**Minute of meeting held on Tuesday 18 September 2018**

**7.00pm in Blairingone Primary School**

**Present**

Councillor Caroline Shiers	Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee
Councillor Callum Purves	Vice Convener, Lifelong Learning Committee
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director, Education and Children's Services
Sharon Johnston	Head of Education Early Years & Primary
Karen Robertson	Service Manager, Business Services

**In Attendance**

Councillor Michael Barnacle	Perth and Kinross Council
Councillor Richard Watters	Perth and Kinross Council
Gareth Findlay	Transformation Project Officer
Peter Marshall	Strategy and Policy Manager
Stewart Maxwell	Education Scotland

Janice Johnstone - Minutes	Perth and Kinross Council
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12 members of the public.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Councillor Shiers opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public in attendance to the statutory consultation public meeting. Councillor Shiers introduced herself and the Council officers to those in attendance.

**2. Format of meeting**

Sheena Devlin briefly outlined the statutory consultation process and the proposal. Sheena Devlin advised that attendees of the meeting are encouraged to express their views or concerns which would be recorded and published in the minute of the public meeting. She explained that she would stop at intervals during the presentation to take questions. Members of the public were advised that the Council officers in attendance would be able to provide more specific information regarding parts of the proposal relating to their respective service areas. Karen Robertson advised that 5 October 2018 is the deadline for any representations to be made on the proposal.

**3. Presentations**

Karen Robertson expanded on the pre consultation work; it is important to explain where the Council is in the process and what will come next. An explanation of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 was given and why this is this legislation that Perth & Kinross Council is following. The only decision which has been taken at this stage is that Elected Members have approved that a Statutory Consultation is to be undertaken.

- A proposal paper has been produced and published including an Education Benefits Statement.
- The statutory consultation period will run from 27 August 2018 – 5 October 2018.
- A note of questions taken at the meeting tonight will be recorded as representations.

At the end of the consultation period the Council is required to send the consultation documentation to Education Scotland, who then have 3 weeks to consider representations, visit affected schools and speak with staff, parents and pupils.

The Council will then publish the consultation report which will include representations, Education Scotland's report and responses to any representations that were made. The report must be published for at least 3 weeks before a decision can be taken by the Lifelong Learning Committee which is likely to be March 2019. It was emphasised that these timescales are indicative and purposefully kept flexible should any part of the process require to be extended.

If the decision of Lifelong Learning Committee is to keep the school open then the Council cannot revisit the decision for 5 years. If the decision is made to close Blairingone Primary School then the Council would notify Scottish Ministers by the end of March 2019. Ministers then have 8 weeks to consider the Council's decision. Representations can be made in writing to Scottish Ministers during the first 3 weeks. If Ministers decide not to close the school then the decision could be referred to the School Closure Panel, who then have a further 16 weeks for consideration.

Sheena Devlin explained that any comments can also be made online. And the purpose of this Consultation is to seek views and representations on the proposal.

### **The Proposal**

Sheena Devlin gave a presentation explaining the proposal and the background to the proposal which outlined the reasons for the proposal. The reasons included the under occupancy of Blairingone Primary School. The likely effect on the local community was also explained. It was noted that Community Council meetings were held alternately in Blairingone Primary School.

### **Travel/Transport**

Karen Robertson advised that a high level assessment had been undertaken to identify how pupils at Blairingone Primary School would be affected by the proposal.

Karen Robertson provided information about the maximum statutory walking distances set out in legislation (2 miles for children aged up to 8 years and 3 miles for children aged 8 and over) for children attending their catchment school. Parents were advised that many primary pupils, including P1 pupils, are transported every day to school in appropriately sized transport and were escorted to and from the transport by school staff ensuring all children arrived and left school safely. It was noted that escorts/supervisors were not normally provided on any mainstream home to school transport.

### **Educational Benefits**

Sharon Johnston provided an overview of how the educational benefits were considered and explained that this did not mean that the education being provided at Blairingone Primary School was not good.

The purpose of the educational benefits statement was not to compare the schools but to demonstrate what benefits could be provided.

#### 4. Questions

**Q Will the Council honour any comments made before tonight?**

**A** All comments submitted from the 27 August 2018 will be formally recorded as part of the statutory consultation. Any comments regarding Blairingone Primary School made before the Council had agreed to commence statutory consultation on a formal proposal, will have to be submitted as part of the consultation as any comments made were prior to a formal proposal being published. Karen Robertson advised parents that the Council wanted to know their views on the proposal; any alternatives and their views on what currently is being proposed. Karen also reiterated these must be submitted no later than 5 October 2018.

There were no other questions pertaining to the statutory process.

**Q Back in March the decision was different, why?**

**A** Councillor Shiers advised that Lifelong Learning Committee did not proceed with considering the report on Blairingone in March due to Elected Members seeking confirmed information on the Local Development Plan. This was to ascertain what impact there would be in the community regarding new housing at that time. Peter Marshall shared with parents that housing developments have been discussed for the Blairingone area since 1992. The South side of the village is currently being suggested for planning permission for 50 new houses.

**Q How can you predict what the housing market in Blairingone will look like?**

**A** It is difficult to be exact but evidence from similar locations suggests that the build rate would be slow (5 per year) due to its rural location. Sheena Devlin used Guildtown as an example whereby after building 50 new houses, there were no primary age school children from these houses who attended the local school.

**Q What about childcare? Would a Nursery or Out Of School Care save the school?**

**A** The Council will record this, but according to the figures and what is known of the demographics in the area according to NHS figures, the number of pre-school pupils living in Blairingone is very low. The data we receive from the NHS is anonymous by postcode area and pupil numbers for school cannot be confirmed until they register for school.

**Q In respect of the work undertaken to seek the views of parents about increasing the catchment area, aside from NHS data, how do you get your figures for pre-school pupils as no-one I knew was asked their views?**

**A** An email was sent directly to all parents living in the identified area and to the local private nursery to identify potential pre-school pupils who could attend Blairingone Primary School if the catchment area was extended, to which the Council received 4 responses.

**Q Is this all informed guess work? All we need is 5/6 more children to have the school at full capacity.**

**A** Sheena Devlin advised the current figures:

- Capacity of School – 25 pupils
- School Roll 2011 – 11 pupils
- School Roll in September 2018 – 5 pupils
- 8 pupils living in the catchment area attend other Perth and Kinross schools
- 5 pupils living in the catchment area attend school outwith Perth and Kinross



- The projected pupil roll is expected to remain static over the next 4 years

**Q What is the capacity at Fossoway Primary School and what would happen in an influx of new pupils want to enrol in the next few years?**

**A** There would be no breach in capacity with the forecast of Blairingone pupils included. Fossoway Primary School currently has 111 pupils as of September 2018 and the full capacity of the school is 150 pupils. The current forecast pupil roll for 2022 is 117 pupils.

**Q What happens if it reaches full capacity?**

**A** This is very unlikely; the projected pupils from all planned house building has been taken into consideration The last time Blairingone Primary School was at full capacity was the early eighties.

**Q Why was a QIO asking the children questions, most children found it very upsetting?**

**A** Consultation with pupils is a requirement as part of the statutory consultation process. The Council is very happy to share the questions that the children were asked and the process followed.

**Q If the decision is made to close Blairingone PS, would the current teachers be made redundant?**

**A** It was confirmed that no discussion regarding individual members of staff would take place during a public meeting. It was advised that staffing across all schools is fluid dependant on pupil numbers and, as part of the annual staffing exercise, teachers are regularly re-deployed to other schools. This would be the same for Blairingone Primary School if the proposal was to be implemented.

**Q Why hasn't the school been maintained over the last few years?**

**A** The school has been graded as category B for both condition and suitability. The suitability and condition of the school is not a factor leading to this consultation as both the condition and suitability of the school are considered satisfactory. The Council has an obligation to be completely transparent. Councils have a finite budget and not every school is maintained to the same degree on a yearly basis. It is a much wider maintenance programme and priorities have to be identified across the whole of the school estate within the budget available.

**Q The savings identified in the report are not correct and are overstated as staff costs have been included but you have confirmed no staff would be made redundant so how can their salaries be included as a saving?**

**A** It was explained that each school has a budget allocated to it for staff costs and where staff transfer to another school, then that is the budget used to meet the costs of staff employed in that school. If a school had no staff employed, then the budget for that school would no longer be required regardless of whether the staff had moved to a new school location as the staff costs would then be met from the budget for the school they were employed in.

**Q Will the school be sold?**

**A** Every consideration would be taken into account before the building would be put up for sale in the event of the proposal being implemented.

**Closing**

Sheena Devlin closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and their contribution and again reiterated that this is not a 'done deal'. Anyone who wishes their views to be included is encouraged to make a representation through the consultation process before the closing date.



**Perth & Kinross Council**  
**Education and Children's Services**  
**Blairingone Primary School**  
**Summary of Consultation Responses**

The statutory consultation on the proposal to close Blairingone Primary School commenced on Monday 27 August 2018 and closed on Friday 5 October 2018.

Details of the proposal document were issued to the list of consultees contained within the Proposal Paper. 231 letters were issued with a link to the proposal paper and details of where and how to obtain a paper copy. The Proposal Paper was also published on the Council website. A Public Notice advert was placed in the local press on 27 August 2018.

A specific email address was set up for representations and enquiries. This was in addition to the usual methods of submitting representations. An online response form was set up on the consultation webpage.

## **Public Meetings**

As part of the statutory consultation process, 2 public meetings were held on 6 September 2018 at Fossoway Primary School and 18 September 2018 at Blairingone Primary School. The same presentation was given at each meeting.

### **Thursday 6 September 2018 – Fossoway Primary School**

Attended by 2 Elected Members. No members of the public attended.

Questions and comments were around:

- The reason for the proposed date of closure.
- When the outcome of the consultation would be reported back to Committee.
- Whether transport costs had been factored into the proposed savings.
- Consideration of a joint Headship as an interim position until the house building position is known.
- Whether Education Scotland's report would be provided to Lifelong Learning Committee.
- What the process would be if Education Scotland raised any significant issues regarding the Council's proposal.
- The lack of attendance by parents suggests Fossoway Parents are not concerned with the outcome whereas Blairingone parents are concerned.
- House building projections and the impact on projected pupil rolls.
- Whether Education & Children's Services was aware of all house building, including affordable housing planned for Crook of Devon.

### **Tuesday 18 September 2018 – Blairingone Primary School**

Attended by 12 members of the public.

Questions and comments were mainly around:

- Why the decision to defer the report on Blairingone Primary School was taken in March 2018.
- The predictions of what the housing market will be in Blairingone.
- Whether a nursery and/or Out of School Care Club would increase pupil numbers.
- How the data for pre-school pupils is obtained.

- The capacity of Blairingone Primary School.
- The capacity of Fossoway Primary School and what would happen if there was an influx of pupils.
- The process for consulting with pupils at Blairingone Primary School.
- What would happen to staff if Blairingone Primary School was to close.
- Why the school has not been maintained over past years.
- The calculation of proposed savings if the proposal was to be implemented.
- Whether Blairingone Primary School would be sold.

## Response Forms

5 online response forms were received. 1 response agreed with the Council's proposal and 4 disagreed with the Council's proposal. 2 responses were only partially completed and did not contain the respondents' names, addresses or respondent groups.

RESPONDENT GROUP	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	AGREE	DISAGREE
Parents	-	-	-
Pupils	-	-	-
Staff	3	-	3
Elected Members	-	-	-
Parent Councils	-	-	-
Community Members	-	-	-
Grandparents	-	-	-
Trade Unions	-	-	-
Unknown	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

## Comments Received on Response Forms as Submitted

- As a council tax payer in Perth & Kinross, I feel very strongly that it is not best use of limited resources to keep schools such as this open. It is not in any way remote, being sited on a main road, and is only a short distance from an excellent school, Fossoway Primary School. I understand that the school is NOT used by the community at the moment, so it is ludicrous to suggest that PKC should keep it open for this reason. Why should council tax payers fund a school for a handful of pupils?
- Blairingone Primary School provides a nurturing educational experience for its pupils. Larger schools do not suit all pupils and those currently at Blairingone benefit from the education they get here. It is a good place for learning and pupils are involved in lots of decision making, helping out within the community and have forged links with local nursing home. The grounds and the woods which we have access to are great for outdoor learning and pupils have recently gained John Muir Awards. Additionally a 7th Green Flag.

The community also contributes and our Textile Bank which is used by school and community alike provides the funds for activities in the school including outings which are subsidised by this allowing all pupils to take part without financial considerations. In addition the proposals suggest older people are more likely to move to villages which through my own experience is the opposite with many now moving to places where they have facilities such as doctors, shops on their doorstep as many younger families are happy to drive. It is also shortsighted that future planning is not taken into account as it is one of the preferred places for development on the LDP as voted by other communities as well and feel it is inevitable housing will take place. In addition due to our close proximity to Dollar Academy there are children who would have attended there anyway and will continue to do so.

- Blairingone Primary School is the last remaining community building in the village. In my view PKC have done very little to bring the fallen numbers up. I live in Powmill and would jump at the chance to send my children to Blairingone but it does not fall in my catchment, even though its less mileage from my doorstep.
- Blairingone Primary is a very nurturing, inclusive school where pupils, staff, parents and community members' work very well together to ensure the very best learning and teaching experiences for all of its learners. The school received very high ratings from its most recent HMI inspection report (Sept 2013) gaining an evaluation of 'very good' for improvements in performance, learners' experiences, meeting learning needs, the curriculum and improvement through self-evaluation. In my opinion, these standards have been maintained and built on since this report was published. The report found the following areas of key strengths–
  - Motivated and enthusiastic children who value their school and each other
  - Partnerships with staff, children and parents which enhance children's learning
  - Children's learning experiences, particularly outdoors and in the wider community
  - Children's achievements, nurtured in a caring school environment.

The report also noted that pupils relationships with each other are impressive, treating others with mutual respect. I therefore feel that the education benefits of pupils remaining at Blairingone are just as strong, if not stronger, as the arguments for moving them. Pupil numbers in very small schools fluctuate considerably from term to term and year to year. For example, a new family has recently enrolled their child and they have two siblings who are due to start school in the next year or two. I have found that it is therefore very difficult to predict the school role with any certainty. However, catchment families who have visited the school but have enrolled elsewhere have noted that it is the lack of pre-school and after school provision which are the greatest barriers to families enrolling their children. A difficulty faced by many rural schools. In all my years as Head Teacher, over ten, I have never encountered a family who were not extremely enthusiastic about the educational provision at Blairingone. They particularly value our flexible, creative and relevant curriculum with its emphasis on real life learning and learning outdoors. Our small numbers enable us to travel outwith the school more frequently than most schools would be able to thereby enriching the education experience of our pupils. We also work closely with other catchment schools, take part in local authority events/experiences and join with other small schools to ensure that all of our pupils gain wider educational and social experiences. On the whole our pupils transition very well into High School and tend to know a wider variety of their peers as a result of these activities.

- The educational support that Blairingone provides to individual children. Presently the children on role would for a variety of reasons find a larger educational setting a challenge to their learning. Long standing housing development plan which at some point will go ahead.

## Written Representations

During the consultation period between 27 August 2018 and 5 October 2018, representations were invited from statutory consultees and interested parties. 7 written responses were received in total:

Parent	- 3
Elected Member	- 2
Other - Business	- 2

One parent submitted 2 written representations, therefore this represents 6 individuals.

All the written representations stated they did not agree with the proposals. Five of the written responses were from consultees who had also attended either one or both of the public meetings and many of the points/queries submitted were also raised at the public meetings.

Questions and comments were mainly around:

- The provision of a nursery and after school club at Blairingone Primary School.
- Pupils should have a say in the decision.
- The relationship Blairingone Primary School has with the Nursing Home in Rumbling Bridge.
- The nursery and P1 pupils are all in the same class at Fossoway Primary School and it is not felt that this is good for the children.
- Pupils from Powmill should be provided with transport which may attract more pupils to Blairingone Primary School.
- The potential for future house building in Blairingone, Crook of Devon and Powmill and the implications upon education provision within the local area.
- The individual needs of pupils being met in a larger school.
- The need to look at ways to develop and stimulate the community including prioritising and encouraging house building and rural development.
- If the school was to close, this may threaten the potential for future house building in the area.
- Query regarding the future projected pupil numbers for Blairingone Primary School.
- The content of the pupil consultation with pupils at Blairingone Primary School.
- Volume of traffic at Fossoway Primary School and road safety.
- Blairingone Primary School being the last remaining community centre.
- Pupils being transported to Fossoway Primary School travelling on the A977.
- Why Cleish Primary School catchment has not been considered when it is as close to Blairingone as Fossoway is.
- The option for a shared Headship for Blairingone and Fossoway Primary Schools.
- Reviewing the catchment to extend Blairingone catchment area to include Powmill.

## **Other Submissions**

One parent established an online change.org petition titled “Save our Rural School, Blairingone Primary School which obtained 374 signatures. Nine signatures were identified as Blairingone or Fossoway residents.



**Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010****Pupil consultation, Fossoway Primary School****11 September 2018****Mark Neil, Service Manager (Inclusion)****Lorna Hamilton, Project Officer (Early Years & Primary)**




Each class group had a short, age appropriate presentation on the proposal, which was to close Blairingone and have all children in the Blairingone and Fossoway catchment areas attend Fossoway Primary School.

The pupils' understanding of the proposal was checked, with discussion taking place to ensure that all pupils understood.

Pupils were then asked to indicate by sticker which of three emotions best described how they felt about the proposal. These are detailed below.




Pupils were also given the opportunity to ask questions/share thoughts and these are also summarised below, for each class group.

**P1/2 (22 pupils)**

		
17	5	0

**Comments****“Get lots more money”****“Might make new friends”****“They might like our teachers”****“Better ideas with more people”****“We will make them feel welcome”**

**P2/3 (22 pupils)**

		
18	1	3

**Comments**

**“Good idea for learning”**

**“There might be lots more noise”**



**“Good because we have a much bigger school than them”**

**Questions**

***Does everyone have to come to Fossoway Primary School?***

No, they have the right to choose which school they will attend. They can attend Fossoway Primary School, or make a placing request to attend any other school of their or their parents' choice.

**P4/5 (20 pupils)**

		
19	1	0

**Comments**

**“Excited for new pupils”**

**“Sad because Blairingone has to close, but happy that we will have more people at our school”**

**“Excited to see what classes the children will join”**

**“Sad because they might not want to change school”**

**Questions**

***Would we have to make more space for the children coming from Blairingone Primary School?***

No there is plenty of space in Fossoway to take the children coming from Blairingone

***Why are there only 6 children at Blairingone Primary School, is this why it is closing?***

Explained that it might be closing because there were not many pupils at the school

***What will happen to the teachers at Blairingone Primary School?***

We don't know the answer to that yet

***Are the children at Blairingone happy to come to Fossoway Primary School?***

We will be having a meeting with the children there, just like we are doing here with you

***How many boys and girls are there?***

We cannot answer that yet

***What class will the children go into?***

We cannot answer that yet, either

**P5/6 (20 pupils)**

**11 September 2018**

		
11	9	0

**Comments**

**“It will be nice to have some new pupils in our school”**

**“New opportunities and friendships”**

**“I would like to see new people but it wouldn't be fair for them to drive all this way when they have a school near them”**

**“I don't really care about it”**

**“I don't know”**

**“I feel quite bad and sorry for them to have to move but I think it will be a good chance to make new friends”**

**“Time for more friends and fun”**

**“It’s a good idea because Blairingone is a small school”**

## **Questions**

***Won’t the P7’s only be here for a short time?***

Yes, the current P7s won’t be coming to Fossoway at all, as they will be going to High School.

***Would the teachers from Blairingone come to Fossoway?***

We don’t know yet what where the teachers will go

***Would the money from Blairingone come to Fossoway?***

There may be some money, as each pupil has a sum allocated to them, so if the pupils come, money to fund them would also come

***What would happen to the Blairingone Primary School building?***

We don’t know that and we wouldn’t be the ones to decide

***What ages are the children?***

We can’t tell you that yet

***Do we get to see the proposal report?***

*Yes, it is available for anyone to read it*

## **Primary 7**

While the Primary 7 class did not form part of the statutory consultation group, the proposal was shared with them and they were asked for comments.

The proposal was outlined, and the comments were as follows:

**“Good idea because we can help Blairingone when they close, we have a school for them”**

**“We would welcome them but if they didn’t want to come to our school, that’s ok”**

**“They deserve to be here”**

**“They will make more friends here”**

**“They might feel better when they move into High School because they will have made more friends at Fossoway to move up with”**

## **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

### **Fossoway Primary School Staff meeting – 11 September 2018**

**In Attendance**            **Mark Neil, Service Manager (Inclusion) (MN)**  
                                 **Lorna Hamilton, Project Officer (Early Years & Primary) (LH)**  
                                 **Jodie Watt, Business Assistant – note taker**  
                                 **8 members of staff**

This meeting was held to allow staff the opportunity to receive the same information that was shared at the public meeting on 6 September 2018. Staff had the opportunity to ask questions throughout the presentation.

MN and LH gave an overview of the reasons for the proposal, the current arrangements at both Blairingone and Fossoway, the effect on the community, travelling arrangements and the educational benefits.

In addition, LH talked through the process for consultation, including the input from Education Scotland. The timeline for the different stages was shared.

Staff made the following comments, and asked the undernoted questions.

#### **Comments**

**“I can understand the wider friend group, but will be sad for families in Blairingone losing their local school”**

**“This will help us keep the roll of Fossoway Primary up”**

**“Not sure why Blairingone has been kept open this long”**

#### **Questions**

***Are there a number of schools going through this?***

The phasing of the programme was explained, as well as the criteria for schools' inclusion in the programme.

***What about mothballing?***

The process for mothballing a school was explained. It would only be done with the agreement of the current parents, and it could not be an indefinite arrangement, so a decision would still need to be taken as to whether to close the school or not.

***I know of a parent who has 2 children in nursery, living in Blairingone catchment, where should she register her child for P1?***

*At the moment, this is still only a proposal, and she should therefore register her child wherever she would normally choose to. Any decision made to close the schools will be after January, so enrolments should be based on the current arrangement.*

Copies of consultation proposal response forms were left for staff to complete, either on an individual basis, and/or to be used for a collective staff response.

## **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

### **Pupil consultation (5 pupils) – Blairingone Primary School**

**Mark Neil, Service Manager (Inclusion)**

**Lorna Hamilton, Project Officer (Early Years & Primary)**

**17 September 2018**

There were 5 children in the class. One of the pupils is in P7 and ordinarily would not form part of the statutory consultation, however it was felt that it would be fair to include all pupils in the session.

Consultation was held as a circle time session. Photographs of both Blairingone and Fossoway Primary School were shared with the pupils.

First a check was done that the pupils knew what was meant by “proposal” and the pupils understood that it meant that it was a suggestion but hadn’t been decided. One pupil was initially unclear, but it was explained to them in an age appropriate manner and they agreed that they understood. The pupils were asked if they understood what “pupil consultation” meant. The process was explained to them, making clear that their opinions would be noted and passed to the people that make the decisions.

The proposal was shared as

***“How do you feel about the option to close Blairingone, and have all children in the Blairingone and Fossoway catchment areas go to Fossoway Primary School?”***

There was a short discussion about Fossoway Primary, and the experience the pupils had had of the school – one pupil used to attend, others used to visit the school for PE lessons.

The proposal was explained. The older pupils were clear about the alternative schools they thought they might attend, evidencing that they were aware of the proposal and had been involved in discussion outwith school.

The pupils were asked for their views and the comments made were:

- Won’t get to draw at new school
- Other schools, I couldn’t draw, or I was on the computer all the time.
- It would feel weird heading to another school
- I don’t like too many people. I’m shy
- In smaller schools, everyone gets to know each other. In bigger schools, some people don’t like you
- X (one of the pupils) had a few bullies at Fossoway. (this was not expressed by the subject, but by an older pupil)
- Fossoway is a big school and there are a lot of classes
- At Blairingone, you have more friends, and a bigger playground
- It depends what big school you go to, what it’s like
- There are different types of people.



When the pupils were asked if they thought the proposal was right, and Blairingone should close the answers were:

No	4	One pupil expressed at this point that they didn't want to move
Not sure	1	

One pupil was a P7 and would not be impacted by the implementation of the proposal.

One pupil gave a detailed description of what would happen to the building if it closed, including locking doors and gates. They asked what would happen to their drawings and the pictures on the walls.

Finally, the pupils were asked what they liked the most about Blairingone. The answers given were:

- I like the ipads and computer
- I like that there are not too many people and you get to choose what you do.
- It's good to interact with each other and the playground is big
- I like wet playtimes
- I like the ipads
- I like playing games on the ipad

At one point, one of the pupils told another that they had "forgotten" to say that small schools let you play with different ages. This was not the view of the pupil who was giving his views. The session ended by thanking the pupils for their comments. It was explained how the comments will be used and when the decision would be made.

The session finished 10 minutes before the end of the day, to allow the Headteacher to finish up the school day with the class, in the normal manner.

## **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

### **Blairingone Primary School Staff meeting – 17 September 2018**

**In Attendance**            **Mark Neil, Service Manager (Inclusion) (MN)**  
                                 **Lorna Hamilton, Project Officer (Early Years & Primary) (LH)**  
                                 **3 members of staff**

This meeting was held to allow staff the opportunity to receive the same information that was to be shared at the public meeting on 18 September 2018. Staff had the opportunity to ask questions throughout the presentation.

MN and LH gave an overview of the reasons for the proposal, the current arrangements at both Blairingone and Fossaway, the effect on the community, travelling arrangements and the educational benefits.

In addition, LH talked through the process for consultation, including the input from Education Scotland. The timeline for the different stages was shared.

LH also shared information from HR about how the proposals may affect staff, in terms of posts.

### **Comments**

**The process is quite clear and straightforward**

### **Questions**

***Are parents able to appeal the decision?***

*There is no automatic right to appeal against the Council's decision*

Copies of consultation proposal response forms were left for staff to complete, either on an individual basis, and/or to be used for a collective staff response.

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to close Blairingone Primary School, move pupils to Fossoway Primary School and that the delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019.**

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to close Blairingone Primary School, move pupils to Fossoway Primary School and that the delineated catchment area of Fossoway Primary School be permanently extended to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School from 1 July 2019. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

### 1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of Blairingone Primary School, Fossoway Primary School; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

### 1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meetings in Fossoway Primary School on 6 September 2018 and at Blairingone Primary School on 18 September 2018 in connection with the council's proposals;

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Blairingone Primary School and Fossoway Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Blairingone Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Perth and Kinross Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 27 August 2018 to 5 October 2018. Copies of the proposal were made available electronically on the council website. Two hundred and thirty one letters were issued to identified stakeholders with a link to the proposal paper and details of where and how to obtain a paper copy. An online response form was set up on the consultation website. A public notice advert was placed in the local press on 27 August 2018. Public meetings were held at Fossoway Primary School on 6 September 2018 and at Blairingone Primary School on 18 September 2018. No members of the public attended the public meeting at Fossoway Primary School. Twelve members of the public attended the public meeting at Blairingone Primary School. The majority were not in favour of the proposal.

2.3 The council received five online responses. Of these, one response agreed with the council's proposal and four disagreed. In addition, six written responses were received. Of these, two were from parents, two from elected members and two from other interested stakeholders including local businesses. All of the written responses did not agree with the proposals. Key areas of concern included: how the needs of individual children would be met in a larger school, the potential impact on future house building and ability to attract families into the area and the increased volume of traffic at Fossoway Primary School. An online petition against the proposal 'Save our rural School, Blairingone Primary School' obtained 374 signatures. Of these, nine were identified as Blairingone or Fossoway residents.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 Blairingone Primary School is a non-denominational school providing education to P1–P7 pupils from the village of Blairingone and surrounding area. There is no nursery provision at Blairingone Primary School. Local nursery provision is located at Fossoway Primary School. The school structure has one composite class across stages Primary 1-7. At the time of the HM Inspector's visit the class consisted of two P2s, one P3, one P6 and one P7. Children currently enjoy a positive and supportive learning environment. There is no physical education hall at Blairingone Primary School. In January 2017, Blairingone Primary School was rated as 'B' (satisfactory) for building condition and 'B' (satisfactory) for educational suitability. Community use of Blairingone Primary School is limited with occasional use by the Community Council. Data suggests the roll of Blairingone Primary School has been falling over the last five years. Future projections indicate that pupil numbers are unlikely to increase above their current level.

Out of 17 children who could attend the school, currently 12 attend neighbouring schools. If this pattern of parental choice continues, then the future sustainability of Blairingone is more challenging.

3.2 The council has set out a reasonable case in support of its proposal. The council states there will be a number of educational benefits for children if the proposal goes ahead. These include improved social interaction opportunities from attending a larger school among children of their own age. Participating in larger year groups will increase the opportunity for collaborative working with children of a similar age and stage of development. Opportunities to engage in a wider range of activities which enrich the curriculum will be increased. Children will benefit from participating in lunchtime and after school activities and the Fossoway House System. Children will benefit from access to physical education on site, rather than having to travel to other schools. Co-location of the nursery in an open plan layout alongside the P1 class will improve the transition experience. Impact on the wider Blairingone community will be minimal as the school is not regularly used for community activity. The proposal will assist the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources as it will not incur costs for running Blairingone Primary School. Fossoway Primary School has the capacity to accommodate additional children as occupancy, based on Census 2017, was 71.3%.

3.3 Parents, children and staff from Blairingone Primary School who met with HM Inspectors did not support the proposal. Parents and staff did not agree that there would be any educational benefits for Blairingone children. Concerns were expressed about the perceived loss of the inclusive, supportive environment the children currently experience. Children enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. The small numbers make it easier for them to interact. Both parents and children were concerned about the potential for bullying in a larger school. Parents felt there would be a reduction in the quality of the educational experience and individual attention. Parents did not accept the projected roll figures. They felt that future housing developments would lead to an increase in the number of children locally. Parents acknowledged that the lack of local nursery provision and parents exercising the right to send their child to other schools contributed to the low numbers at Blairingone. Parents were not happy about their children being bussed to school and the possible increased congestion around Fossoway Primary School. Concern was expressed about the loss of the school as a community facility.

3.4 Parents, including those who live in the Blairingone Primary School catchment area, children and staff from Fossoway Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They thought that engagement with a wider peer group at age and stage would improve children's learning. The co-location and open plan nature of the nursery and lower primary department would improve transition. Children would benefit from access to a wider pool of staff including a full-time Pupil Support Teacher. Attending a larger school would better prepare children for the transition to secondary school. Parents thought the proposal would make better use of limited resources in a time of financial constraints. Fossoway children would welcome improved social opportunities and the chance to make new friends. They thought Blairingone children would benefit from having access to an increased range of physical education activities and lunchtime clubs and opportunities to participate in inter-school team events. Parents, staff and children did not have any concerns about potential increase in the volume of traffic and impact on safety if the proposal proceeds.

3.5 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. In arriving at its proposal the council has clearly assessed the likely benefits to children and in doing so has given due consideration to any reasonable alternatives.

The council carried out a detailed options assessment in which it considered four options. These included: Keeping Blairingone Primary School open; mothballing Blairingone Primary School and moving children to Fossoway Primary School; closing Blairingone Primary School and moving children to Fossoway Primary School; and reviewing the catchment area of Blairingone Primary School to determine whether or not this would increase the roll to a sustainable level. Due to insufficient demand, coupled with parents choosing to place their children at other primary schools, none of the options bar closure were considered as viable or sustainable. The current school building is not used regularly for community activity. The proposal does not impact negatively on children at Fossoway Primary School. Blairingone children will be entitled to free transport. The journey time is not unreasonable when compared with other parts of the authority.

#### **4. Summary**

Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to close Blairingone Primary School, move pupils to Fossoway Primary School and permanently extend the Fossoway Primary School delineated catchment area to subsume the whole delineated catchment area of Blairingone Primary School has clear educational benefits. Blairingone Primary School children currently enjoy learning in an inclusive and supportive environment. However, Blairingone children will have access to greater learning opportunities, wider experiences and increased socialisation through being part of a larger school at Fossoway. Opportunities to engage in lunchtime, after school and team events will be increased. Transition from the nursery class to the P1 class will be enhanced. Projected numbers of children within the catchment are insufficient to make the school viable. A significant factor in this is parental placing requests to other schools. Fossoway Primary School has the capacity to accommodate additional children. The proposal will assist the council to deliver 'Best Value' through making more efficient and effective use of its resources. In taking forward the proposal the council should set out how it will ensure current Blairingone children are supported to positively make the transition to Fossoway School. It should also work with parents to address the concerns they raised such as bullying and travelling by bus. The council should also consider how the vacant school might be used to the benefit of the local Blairingone community.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
October 2018**