

**PROPOSAL ON THE PERMANENT CLOSURE OF
BOTHKENNAR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

A REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION

8TH FEBRUARY 2021 TO 2ND APRIL 2021

Consultation Report

Contents

1 Introduction	3
Background.....	3
Proposal.....	3
Purpose of Consultation Report.....	3
Timelines.....	3
Consultees.....	3
2 Response to consultation	5
Summary.....	5
Response Analysis.....	5
Public Meeting.....	6
3 Summary of Responses	7
Main points made in support of the proposal.....	7
Main issues raised by those who object to the proposal.....	7
Response to main issues raised.....	7
4 Report By Education Scotland	8
Legislative Background.....	8
Summary of Report.....	8
Response to the Report by Education Scotland.....	8
Appendix A: Written Responses	9
Responses from those in favour of the permanent closure.....	9
Responses from those objecting to the permanent closure.....	11
Appendix B: Minutes	12
Online Public Meeting on 9th March 2021 at 18.30	12
Appendix C: Consultation Proposal	14
Appendix D: Education Scotland Report	22
Introduction.....	23
Consultation process.....	24
Educational aspects of proposal.....	24
Summary.....	25

1 Introduction

Background

During school session 2018/2019, the pupil roll at Bothkennar Primary School fell to just 4 pupils after a prolonged period of declining numbers. Following a consultation with affected parents and the school community, it was agreed that Bothkennar Primary School would be mothballed, subject to an annual review of demand for pupil places, and that Beancross Primary School would become the proxy catchment school for the area.

Two years on, the primary age population in the Bothkennar Primary School Catchment area has not changed, with the prospect of declining numbers over the foreseeable future.

Following discussion at the Education, Children and Young People Executive on the 26th January 2021, it was agreed to progress with a formal statutory consultation on a proposal to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School.

Proposal

It is proposed that Bothkennar Primary School be permanently closed.

The details of the proposal can be read in the Proposal document which is attached as Appendix C

Purpose of Consultation Report

The closure of a school requires a formal consultation to be carried out in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This report documents the formal consultation undertaken on this proposal between Monday 8th February and Thursday 2nd April 2021.

Timelines

- The Consultation was over a 8 week period from the Monday 8th February and Thursday 2nd April 2021
- Education Scotland reported back on the educational aspects of the proposal on the 30th April 2021
- This Consultation Report was published online on the 10th May 2021

Consultees

During the consultation period, views were sought from a range of stakeholders and interested parties who were contacted by email (unless otherwise stated):

- Parents of all nursery and primary pupils who live within the catchment of Bothkennar Primary School and/or attend Beancross Primary School. (282 families)
- The Staff at Beancross Primary School
- The Grangemouth (including Skinflats) Community Council
- The 2 school staff trade unions (EIS and GMB)
- Parent Council of Beancross Primary School
- All 154 households in the Bothkennar Primary School Catchment (by post).
- The wider public (via the Council's website and an advert in the Falkirk Herald)

Consultation Report

All those consulted were invited to respond in writing, by e-mail or through the online consultation hub at say.falkirk.gov.uk and to attend the public meeting that was held during the consultation period.

Consultation Report

2 Response to consultation

Summary

There were 7 responses to the consultation from 6 individuals and 1 Community Council. 4 were through the online consultation hub and 3 via e-mail. These are summarised in this report and can be read in full in Appendix A.

The written responses were received though the online consultation hub and e-mail. They are summarised by category in the following table 1 below:

Table 1: Total number of respondents by category

Type of Respondent	Number of Responses
Individuals	6
Groups/Organisations	1
TOTAL	7

Table 2: All Responses

Respondents	Number of Responses
A parent of an early years or primary aged child affected by the proposal	1
Community Council	1
Local Resident	1
Staff	2
Pupil	1
Other*	1
Total	7

*The other respondent is a member of the public not local to the school.

Response Analysis

Consultees were asked the question: Do you agree with the proposal to permanently close Bothkennar primary School. 6 (86%) of respondents agreed with the proposal with 1 (14%) disagreed with the proposal.

Table 3: All responses

Responses	Number of Responses	%
I agree to the proposal	6	86%
I disagree to the proposal	1	14%
Total	7	100%

Consultation Report

Analysis of the responses by respondents is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Responses by respondents

Respondents	For Proposal	Against Proposal
Community Council	1	
Pupil	1	
Parent	1	
Staff	2	
Local Resident	1	
Other Member of the Public		1
Total	6	1

Responses from individuals

There were 6 responses from individuals to the consultation.

5 of these (pupil, parent, staff members and a local resident) agreed to the permanent closure of Bothkennar Primary School with comments focusing on the educational and social benefits of attending a larger school.

1 member of the public who does not live within the catchment of Bothkennar Primary disagreed with the proposal to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School.

All individual comments are detailed in Appendix A

Responses from groups/organisations

The Grangemouth (Including Skinflats) Community Council responded in support of the proposal.

Their response is detailed in Appendix A

Public Meeting

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and guidance in place at the time, the Public Meeting was held online using Microsoft Teams. A link to the meeting was sent out to all email consultees and any others that requested it.

The public meeting was held on the 9th March 2021 at 6:30pm. 2 Local residents attended the meeting along with 6 Falkirk Council Officers 2 members of the Falkirk area Parent Forum, 1 Councillor (the Portfolio holder for Education) and an observer from Education Scotland. The full minutes from this meeting can be read in Appendix B.

3 Summary of Responses

Main points made in support of the proposal

- Attending a larger school provides more social opportunities than the smaller school
- Educational benefits such as working collaboratively with peers their own age and of a similar ability.
- children are better prepared to transition to secondary school from a larger primary school

Main issues raised by those who object to the proposal

- Concern about the future of the community without a school within it.
- Future use of the building

Response to main issues raised

- **There is concern about the future of Skinflats as a community without a school within it.**

Response: Falkirk Council have embarked on a major community engagement exercise with Community Conversations happening across the Council area. Local residents can get involved in to discuss concerns about their local area, including the sustainability of small villages like Skinflats.

- **There were questions about the possible future use of the building**

Response: If the closure goes ahead the building will be deemed surplus to operational requirements by Children's Services and will be transferred to the Council's Asset Management Team. The Community Conversations would be used to explore future options for use of the building.

- **The mosaic created by former pupils within Bothkennar Primary School was identified as being important to the residents within the Skinflats community. It has been requested by the Community Council that the mosaic be transferred to Beancross Primary School**

Response: The transfer of the mosaic between Bothkennar Primary School to Beancross Primary School has been completed.

4 Report By Education Scotland

Legislative Background

Under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Education Scotland (formerly Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) must prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal out to consultation.

Summary of Report

The Education Scotland Report can be read in full in Appendix D.

The summary conclusions taken from this report were as follows:

- Falkirk Council set out the case for the mothballing of Bothkennar Primary school commenting on the prolonged period of declining numbers in the primary age within the catchment area of Bothkennar Primary School.
- The inspectors agreed with some, but not all, aspects of the council's education benefits statement and are confident there is sufficient merit to consider the permanent closure of the school.
- The inspectors agreed with the values on the socialisation with larger peer groups, access to a wider range of clubs and activities and opportunities for leadership provided in the bigger school.
- They also commented on the response from stakeholders who were in favour of the positive impact of attending a school with larger peer groups, continuity in educational provision from ages 3-12.
- They did however comment that the Council should more clearly outline to the community the work it undertook to examine alternatives to the closure of the school, and should the proposal go ahead, work with the local community to explore the possible future use of the school building.

Response to the Report by Education Scotland

The Council welcomes the report by Education Scotland and will take on board fully the comments made regarding the Educational Benefits Statement when considering such proposals in future.

With regard to alternatives to closure, the very low pupil roll and geography of the school catchment ruled out consideration of any school reorganisation to boost the roll (such as rezoning). It was felt that the options for future use of the building were not educational and as such would need to be, and will be discussed with the wider community as part of the Community Conversations now underway across the Council area.

Appendix A: Written Responses

Responses from those in favour of the permanent closure

Groups/Organisations:

- Grangemouth (including Skinflats) Community Council
“We at Grangemouth Inc skinflats community council have been discussing the proposed permanent closure of Bothkennar primary! As a community council we aren't opposing the closure sharing the view the children's education comes first. This appears to be a view shared by the community in Skinflats. .However we have been asked by the community if it would be possible the schools mosaic could be retained and could follow the children to Beancross? This obviously has sentimental value to the residents of the village who want to keep some identity of the school, this may already have been considered so any guidance would be appreciated! Within the school there is a mosaic that was created by former pupils. Can the mosaic be preserved, moved to the Beancross school and installed there? Beancross school is the school that the children from Bothkennar were moved to and will as we understand it be the school that will accommodate future generations of children from Skinflats. For information an initial approach has been made to the headteacher at Beancross and been met with a positive response. Clearly the safe removal, move and reinstatement at the new location will require a degree of coordination and resource, is that something that could be managed as part of the closure budget?”

Individuals:

- Pupils (1) “I have new friends at Beancross because in Bothkennar I only had two friends but now I have loads of friends. I like the playground at Beancross because there is loads of people to play with and there are loads of hiding spots. There wasn't really anyone to play with at Bothkennar but I did like the vegetable garden at Bothkennar but Beancross is better. It was really easy to move to Beancross because I already knew you (Headteacher) and Miss Burns (PT) and Mrs Macfarlane (DHT) and it was like just the same as Bothkennar so it was really easy. Plus we used to come over every week for assembly and to play with everyone in the playground and stuff. We also used to come over for the clubs and groups every week. We used to always get taxis to Beancross and now we don't need to. I really like my teacher in Beancross too and my teacher last year too. “
- Parents (1) “I agree that at present there is no reason to keep the school open for a handful of pupils, however Beancross Primary School is at capacity (the school has a massive catchment area). Bothkennar school could be used to ease the pressure off this school, reducing the catchment area. If for example Bothkennar school was for the primary school children from Bothkennar, Skinflats and the Old town.”
- Staff (2)
“While I think the building should still fulfil a purpose, the requirement of the building to be a functioning school is clearly not needed.

Consultation Report

In my opinion, the children who transferred to Beancross from Bothkennar have developed considerably in social skills and situations. This too, I feel, better prepares the pupils for transitioning to Grangemouth High."

"As the roll at Bothkennar Primary School declined, it became very difficult to maintain high standards of learning and teaching. Although the classes were well staffed with a very high staff to pupil ratio, the children required interactions with peers of their own ages in order to challenge themselves and to have opportunities to work collaboratively with peers of their own age and of a similar ability. At Bothkennar, we made use of video conferencing to link in with classes at Beancross for the children. The video conferences were successful to an extent but the children were keen to work in a classroom with the children at Beancross. To better support the children and also to extend learning opportunities, the children regularly worked at Beancross in classrooms with peers of their own age. This was highly successful and was extended to include social interactions such as playtimes and lunchtimes once or twice per week. In addition, children from Beancross also worked at Bothkennar in order to help support the identify of Bothkennar Primary School. As children transitioned from Bothkennar to the high School the roll dropped to just 5 children which was a serious concern in relation to peer relationships, peer engagement and made it problematic to challenge learners (where there is no peer, it is difficult for children to push themselves further or to challenge themselves that bit more). It became apparent that both the learning needs and social needs of the children at Bothkennar could be better met with regular interactions with the children at Beancross. To facilitate this, the PEF fund was used to take children from Bothkennar to Beancross on a regular basis. The learning experiences offered to the children at Beancross were then extended to those at Bothkennar such as, Dynamic Youth Awards – Pupil Groups such as Woodwork, Cookery, Animation, Coding, Robotics etc. that can't be facilitated in a smaller school with just one teacher. Furthermore, two of the children attended a residential trip to Paris with their new year group and others attended Dalguise outdoor centre and the Belmont Centre. A number of families asked if it would be possible for their child to attend Beancross on a permanent basis. This was facilitated when the decision to mothball was made. For the children who came to Beancross the transition was very smooth as the children already knew the leadership team and peers from their class from the regular visits and collaborative learning opportunities. Furthermore, both schools shared the same expectations, values and vision which created a like for like ethos and environment albeit on a much bigger scale. The children who attended Beancross and have since transferred to High School also made successful transitions supported by large peer groups."

- Local Residents (1)

"Although I recognise the inevitability of permanent closure of the school, I feel Falkirk Council must consider the wider implications of such an action on the community of Bothkennar. The area and environs have by and large gone unrecognised for several years and the closure of this facility will have a direct impact on house lets/ purchase as well as altering the demographics of the area.

It would also be helpful if Falkirk Council could provide pertinent suggestions as to what may/will be replacing the school, taking due cognisance of the fact that the A905 has a 7.5 ton weight restriction. Local residents are already stressed with heavy agricultural traffic which is over this limit, and any additional traffic of this kind would be insufferable.

Will there be a guarantee of consultation prior to any building work taking place should this be the case? Also, will the council continue to maintain the building and grounds until the point of sale/let?"

Consultation Report

Responses from those objecting to the permanent closure

Individuals:

- Other Members of the Public (1)
“A school is not just a building for maintenance but an institution and a centre for education, knowledge and development. It is the live heart of a village, town or a small community. The school may not have enough pupils at present times but the existence of a school in a community is a prerequisite for the existence and development of the community itself.”

Appendix B: Minutes

Online Public Meeting on 9th March 2021 at 18.30 Consultation on the proposal to permanently close Bothkennar Microsoft Teams

Tuesday 9^h March 2021 18:30

Present

Margaret Wilson (MW) (Chair – Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland, Chair of the Falkirk area forum)
Kenneth MacKinnon (KMC) (Parent Forum, Falkirk area forum)
Fiona Richardson (MP) (Member of the Public)
Mr Richardson (MP) (Member of the Public)
Gary Johnstone (GJ) (Education Scotland) as observer
Councillor Adanna McCue (AM) (Portfolio Holder for Education)

Officers

Robert Naylor (RN) (Director of Children's Services, Falkirk Council)
David Mackay (DM) (Head of Education, Children's Services, Falkirk Council)
Gary Greenhorn (GG) (Head of Planning & Resources)
Richard Teed (RT) (Senior Forward Planning Officer)
Siobhan Couttie (SC) (Forward Planning Officer)

Introductions were made by Margaret Wilson. The following presentations were given: Background to the Proposal (Robert Naylor), Educational Benefits (David Mackay), Financial Considerations (Gary Greenhorn), Next Steps (Richard Teed) and Closing Remarks (Councillor Adanna McCue). This was followed by Questions and Answers.

Questions and Answers Session:

Q: I was head teacher at Blackness Primary school for 7 years so I am aware of small school education and I am aware of the problems with small school education can give a teacher, a dedicated and very skilled teacher. I do think it's inevitable, the numbers there are unsustainable. I just feel it was a great school in its time and it was thriving. The village isn't thriving now. The issue isn't the school has to close, there is an inevitability and a feeling in the village that it does have to go, it's unsustainable, you can't afford this as a council and as a service. So there is an alternative and the villagers know this and it is Beancross and it is working and I am pleased about that. From our point of view, we are worried for the infrastructure of the village as it is, the demographics are changing, and with no young people coming into the village, the village is going to die. That is what is worrying the people more. I don't like putting myself up as the spokesperson for the village but it would appear that I am at the moment, the village will die and the shops are away, there is no business in the place itself, that is what is really concerning me and my husband more. I am not sure if this is the proper

Consultation Report

forum for this. But I do appreciate the fact there is no argument from my point of view or the villagers that the school must close.

RN: Are you aware of the ongoing community conversations that are taking place around each ward of the council in terms of the future of all our property assets? Have you been made aware of it or been invited to go along to any of them?

M.P: no I haven't heard of it, it is the first I've heard

RN: They are a series of meetings working their way (around the Council area) and we are on our second iteration of these ward by ward meetings, if you would like to attend on these they are usually in the morning or afternoon and if you would like to provide your contact details, I can make sure the relevant officers invite you to the next one that is appropriate to Bothkennar.

M.P: It was built in 1961, it's a good building and a sound building but it has seen its day and there was a problem with the mobile classroom that was a nursery and there is a lot of ground there, I do take your point there, it is just unsustainable, and its just so sad that it's the times we are in and it's taking us through that and sentiment doesn't come into it.

GG: Yes, a number of years ago, Bothkennar nursery class was mothballed because the numbers dropped, although you may also remember that we got external funding to build the extension which was the games hall to the school. Notwithstanding that, what happens is if the Education, Children and Young Peoples executive agree to our proposal for permanent closure then it becomes surplus to the operational requirements of our service. At that point, the Council's asset management team take over that asset and they would undergo further consultation with local members, the local community, before deciding/recommending what to do with it. It comes back to Roberts point, re: the community conversations if the school is closed. They will inform the options for that asset in the community. The options are that it is used by the Council for community purposes, or leased or sold off for other purposes. So there are a number of options. None of these options are part of this proposal going forward. The council would carry that out as a separate exercise.

M.P: No, the study has been done and we have come to that conclusion ourselves when we could see the numbers dwindling. I taught in the village school when I first came here 44 years ago and at that time there was 67 pupils and 4 teachers, and we produced 2 dux medallists from Bothkennar, I have great respect and value for the school and in its heyday it was wonderful. However, these days are long gone and will not return, so I think absolutely, I am in agreement with the proposal and I think it is inevitable. I do appreciate everyone explaining what is going on.

M.P: With regards to the consultations (*community conversations*), we were not aware of any and we are certainly looking forward getting involved with what is happening. Thank you to everyone for their efforts as it is a big undertaking and onerous task so thank you very much.

RN I believe Siobhan has your email address, I will forward that with your permission to the relevant officer in the council that has the overview of the community conversations and make sure you get an invitation to the next meeting.

Margaret Wilson thanked everyone and the meeting closed.

Appendix C: Consultation Proposal

PERMANENT CLOSURE OF BOTHKENNAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

February 2021

Consultation Report

PROPOSAL

Proposed Change	That Bothkennar Primary School, which has been mothballed since August 2019, is closed permanently.												
Background	<p>During school session 2018/2019, the pupil roll at Bothkennar Primary School fell to just 4 pupils after a prolonged period of declining numbers. Following a consultation with affected parents and the school community, it was agreed that Bothkennar Primary School would be mothballed, subject to an annual review of demand for pupil places, and that Beancross Primary School would become the proxy catchment school for the area.</p> <p>Two years on, the primary age population in the Bothkennar Primary School Catchment area has declined further, with no prospect of this trend changing in the foreseeable future. For this reason, it is now proposed that the school is permanently closed.</p> <p>Before any final decision can be taken on a permanent school closure proposal a formal consultation is required in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This proposal document provides full details of the proposal and the consultation process now underway.</p>												
Pupil numbers in the area	<p>In the 5 years running up to the decision to mothball the school, demand for places had declined each year to very low levels. The following table shows the school roll over this period (taken from the annual school census):</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2014/2015</th> <th>2015/2016</th> <th>2016/2017</th> <th>2017/2018</th> <th>2018/2019</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No. Pupils</td> <td>27</td> <td>25</td> <td>17</td> <td>11</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Pupil data shows that the number of primary age children in the Bothkennar catchment area has reduced by 18% over the last 3 years, and other data shows just 8 pre-school children aged 4 and younger living in the catchment area. This suggests that the primary age population will continue to decline over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Based on all known data, there will be no increase in catchment demand for places in the coming 5 years to justify re-opening the school.</p>		2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	No. Pupils	27	25	17	11	4
	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019								
No. Pupils	27	25	17	11	4								
Proposed Alternative Arrangements	The arrangements in place from August 2019 will continue. Beancross Primary School will remain the catchment primary school for children living in area and free school transport will be provided to pupils choosing their catchment school.												

Educational Benefits Statement	<p>Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Falkirk.</p> <p>With this in mind, Falkirk Council has adopted the following indicators in reviewing the school estate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability. 2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group. 3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art. 4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting. 5. Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary). 6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends. 7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution. 8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented. 9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility. 10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered. <p>Falkirk Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for young people. It is the Authority's view that Bothkennar Primary School cannot meet all of these criteria, whereas the current alternative catchment school, Beancross Primary, can.</p> <p>While it may seem that having fewer pupils in a class would allow a teacher to provide more one-on-one attention, fewer is not always better, when it comes to our pupils learning experiences. Classes low in pupil numbers, have disadvantages. These disadvantages are further compounded when we have a single class school, potentially with only one or two children at each year stage. Some of the problems commonly associated with teaching a small group of pupils are:</p> <p>(i) Attendance Issues</p> <p>While one or two pupils missing a large class isn't a major issue, a small number of absent pupils can make a big difference in a small class. If there are only five or 10 pupils in a class, two missing pupils</p>
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represent a much larger percentage of the class population, making it more difficult for the teacher to continue with planned lessons.

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

(ii) Lack of Diversity

A smaller class is less likely to represent a diverse cross section of society. Pupils benefit from being members of diverse classes because they have the opportunity to hear viewpoints that differ greatly from their own. While some small classes do have a diverse array of members, many are relatively homogeneous in nature and, as such, do not offer pupils the opportunity to learn in a diverse setting;

(iii) Overly Rapid Work Completion

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

(iv) Fewer Activity Options

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

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

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

	<p>(v) Increased Pupil Anxiety Some pupils enjoy the anonymity associated with being a member of a large class. These pupils are uncomfortable in the spotlight and prefer to blend in with the crowd as they move through the process of learning. For pupils of this nature, small classes are far from desirable because in educational settings with reduced pupil numbers they do not have the same opportunity to mix in with their peer group.</p> <p>The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform; and</p> <p>(vi) Pupil performance Smaller classes do not help children achieve better marks in primary school, according to research published recently. The findings, by academics at the University of London's Institute of Education, contradict the popular beliefs of teachers and parents that smaller classes make for a better learning environment.</p> <p>There are many other similar research papers detailing the negative impact of small class sizes on the pupils' learning experience and academic performance, due to the negative impact of the factors described above.</p>
<p>Community Impact</p>	<p>Bothkennar Primary School is classified as a rural school and, as such, this proposal to close it must consider the impact that this closure will have on the local community it serves. Prior to mothballing use/lets of the school was limited to Councillor Surgeries only.</p> <p><u>What will happen to the school building?</u> The school is currently being used as temporary office accommodation for Council staff. There are plans underway to move these staff to other accommodation.</p> <p>Once the building becomes empty, it would be deemed surplus to Children's Services operational requirements and the Council's Asset Management Team would then consider what future options there are for the property, which could include potential sale. However, it is important that all community views are considered prior to this happening and we would welcome your views on possible future uses for this building, should the school close permanently.</p>
<p>Transport/ Sustainability Implications</p>	<p>Another important consideration with any rural school closure is the transport demands arising from the relocation of pupils to a school that is further away.</p>

Consultation Report

Financial Considerations	<p>Bothkennar Primary School has been temporarily closed for nearly 2 years now and all pupils from the area are entitled to free school transport to Beancross Primary School, which is 2.5 miles from Skinflats.</p> <p>School transport is currently provided through extending the existing school bus route by half a mile from the Grangemouth Old Town. There is no cost implications to families affected by the closure. A permanent closure would continue to have very little impact in this respect on costs to the council or distance covered by vehicles.</p> <p>With regard to sustainability concerns, the requirement to transport pupils to Beancross Primary School is more than offset by the closure of this facility which would require disproportionate levels of heating, electricity and maintenance to keep open for so few pupils in comparison.</p> <p>The annual operating costs for the school for 2018/19 was £ 186,632 which represented £ 46,658 per pupil.</p> <p>Based on a slightly different financial assessment used for national benchmarking purposes the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) this shows the cost per pupil for 2018/19 to be £ 40,627.</p> <p>This cost per pupil is significantly higher than both the Falkirk and overall Scottish average cost per primary pupil, which were £ 4,655 and £ 5,259 respectively and reflects the disproportionately higher level of cost per pupil that schools with small rolls have.</p> <p>The permanent closure of Bothkennar Primary School would result in a net annual saving of £ 166,535 which would allow additional financial resources to be redistributed to support the education sector.</p> <p>Note: This saving does not take into account the temporary additional costs being incurred whilst operating this vacant building as an office.</p> <p>In addition, following closure, any costs associated with the upkeep and associated on-going maintenance of this buildings, which is now circa 50 years old, would no longer need to be met. This would allow the Council to use these funds to invest in the wider school estate where it can benefit a larger number of pupils.</p>
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Consultation Report

CONSULTATION

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

Consultation Report

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

Appendix D: Education Scotland Report



Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Falkirk Council to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School.

April 2021

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 Falkirk Council's proposal to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School. 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 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 and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children 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 virtual public meeting held on 2 March 2021 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

Consultation Report

- a virtual visit to the site of Beancross Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

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

Consultation process

2.1 Falkirk Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The consultation process ran from 8 February to 2 April 2021. An online meeting was held on 9 March 2021 which was attended by two members of the public. The main area of concern raised was the future impact on the village should the school close permanently. The council received seven responses to the online survey and by email. Six responses were in favour of the proposal and one against. The respondent disagreeing was not a child, parent, member of staff or local resident.

Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Following consultation with affected parents and the school community, Bothkennar Primary School was mothballed by Falkirk Council in August 2019. During school session 2018-2019, the pupil roll at Bothkennar Primary School fell to four pupils after a prolonged period of declining numbers. As the primary aged population in the catchment area has not increased, nor is likely to increase in the future, the council proposes to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School. The catchment area of Beancross Primary School would be changed permanently to reflect this.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree with some, but not all, aspects of the council's educational benefits statement and are confident that there is sufficient merit to consider the permanent closure of the school.

3.3 Stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors were all in favour of the council's proposal. They recognise the benefits of attending Beancross Primary School. These include larger peer groups allowing children to make new friendships and continuity in educational provision from ages 3-12. A bigger staff team provides a range of possibilities in supporting more flexibly children's learning needs. Children

Consultation Report

work in classes of their own age group and are experiencing increased pace and challenge in their work. In addition, children have access to visiting specialist teachers. Lessons are experienced by children within their stage at Beancross rather than in a multi-composite arrangement. Children who spoke to HM Inspectors shared their favourable experiences of, and easier access to, clubs such as coding, woodwork, cookery and animation that they enjoy at Beancross. They welcome increased choices and opportunities to undertake leadership roles such as 'buddies' to children in P1 and in the nursery.

3.4 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. The council has continued to monitor the pupil roll at the school and engage with the school community. There are sound reasons to consider the long term viability of the school. The overwhelming messages about children's experiences in Beancross Primary are positive. The council has not, however, outlined in detail how it considered any reasonable alternatives to closure of the school before it consulted on the proposal. Most members of the local community accept the rationale for the school closure. Travelling arrangements for children will continue with free transport provided for the relatively short travel distance of between two and three miles.

Summary

HM Inspectors' agree there are clear educational benefits for children in Beancross Primary School. Stakeholders value the socialisation with larger peer groups, access to a wider range of clubs and activities and opportunities for leadership provided in the bigger school. Most stakeholders agree with the council's proposals. Parents, staff and children agree that children's experiences have improved in the new setting. The proposal will assist the council to meet its statutory duty with respect to best value. The council should more clearly outline to the community the work it undertook to examine alternatives to the closure of the school. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should work with the local community to explore the possible future use of the school building.

HM Inspectors

April 2021