



**EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**AUGUST 2024**

**PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

**CLOSURE OF CLATT SCHOOL  
STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

**Consultation open between  
4 September 2024 – 8 November 2024**

**If you have difficulty reading this document please contact  
the Learning Estates Team on 01771 676600 or  
[LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)**

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

- To permanently discontinue education at Clatt School, which is currently mothballed and re-assigning its catchment to Kennethmont School or Rhynie School.
- The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in the Clatt School catchment area.
- The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.

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

The schools affected by this proposal are:

**Clatt School**  
**Kennethmont School**  
**Rhynie School**

**DISTRIBUTION**

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

This document will be provided to:

- Residents living within the Clatt School catchment area
- Parent Council of Kennethmont School and Rhynie School
- Parent/Carers of the pupils at Kennethmont School and Rhynie School
- Pupils at Kennethmont School and Rhynie School
- Staff at Kennethmont School and Rhynie School
- Trade Union representatives of Kennethmont School and Rhynie School staff
- Local Elected Members
- Tap O'Noth Community Council
- Local Early Years Providers
- Education Scotland

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Kennethmont School, Kennethmont, Huntly, AB54 4NP
- Rhynie School, Essie Road, Rhynie, Huntly, AB54 4GF
- Learning Estates Team (call 01771 676600 or email [learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) to arrange for a paper copy to be posted).

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## **1. Legislative Background**

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and sufficient provision of school education (Section 1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (Section 3 of The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2 Under Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, Clatt School is classed a 'remote rural' school (areas with a population of less than 3,000 and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes to a settlement with a population of 10,000 or more). The Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the heightened consideration to be given to rural school closures.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all pupils in its schools.
- 2.2 The proposal document is focused upon Clatt School, located within the village of Clatt in the Marr area of Aberdeenshire. Clatt School is part of the Huntly Cluster of schools.
- 2.3 The proposal document contains several maps. Pdf copies of all the maps will be made available on the Aberdeenshire Council website at the address given on page 2 of this document. Printed copies of the maps will also be available on request at both Kennethmont School and Rhynie School.
- 2.4 The consultation will run from Wednesday 4 September until Friday 8 November 2024. A public meeting will be held to discuss the proposal on 1 October 2024 at 6.30pm at Clatt Village Hall.
- 2.5 The consultation process for this proposal is set out in detail in section 17.

## **3. Reason for Proposal**

- 3.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - No children have attended Clatt School since August 2022 when the school was officially mothballed;
  - In January 2023, the enrolment period for Primary 1 children commencing education in August 2023 was held. At the conclusion of the enrolment period there were no new enrolments for Clatt School. Letters were sent to all residents in the Clatt catchment area informing them there had been no P1 enrolments. The letter asked that if there were any new families or existing families interested in returning to Clatt School to contact the Learning Estates Team by Friday 30 June 2023;

- Despite engagement with the wider community, only one family expressed an interest in their children enrolling at Clatt School for the 2023/24 school session therefore mothballing continued for the 2023/24 session;
  - For the 2024/25 school session only one family expressed an interest in their children enrolling at Clatt School for the school year. A letter was sent to all residents in the Clatt School catchment area informing them that there had not been enough interest from families wanting to attend the school in order to make the experience educationally and socially viable. The letter informed residents that a proposal to close Clatt School will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee and if approved a statutory consultation will be launched;
  - A school roll of eight or fewer pupils provides a challenge to social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age;
  - There were no enrolments for the 2024/2025 school session, and according to NHS data, there are five children or fewer living in the Clatt School catchment area who may be eligible to start Primary 1 over the next four years. A school roll of this size would provide significant impediments to the successful implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence;
  - There is not a reasonable prospect that the number of pupils in the area will increase such that it should be re-opened at a future date;
  - The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, as explained in further detail below in section 4;
  - All alternative uses of the school building would require the official closure of the school in the first instance.
- 3.2 The current proposal follows informal engagement between Aberdeenshire Council officers, local elected members, the community council and community members.
- 3.3 On 31 August 2023, the Education and Children's Services Committee authorised an option appraisal to be carried out regarding the future of Clatt School.
- 3.4 In September 2023 letters were sent to all residents in the Clatt catchment area and an email to the Tap O'Noth Community Council informing them that there had been an insufficient number of pupils wishing to attend Clatt School for the school to become operational again and that to ensure the education experience is viable for all pupils, the school would continue to be mothballed for the 2023/24 academic year. All stakeholders were invited to participate in an online survey and a drop in engagement session was held at Clatt Village Hall on 4 October 2023.
- 3.5 The online survey was completed by 21 respondents and ten members of the community attended the drop in session. Three people sent emails after the engagement session stating their views.
- 3.6 A number of suggestions were made for uses of the school building should Clatt School not be in a position to become operational again. These are detailed in the Option Appraisal document at Appendix B.

- 3.7 During the P1 admissions period for the 2024/25 school session, it was stated on the admissions webpage and in social media posts that all families living in the Clatt School catchment area are still entitled, if interested, to select their catchment school as an option on the P1 admissions form even though the school is currently mothballed.
- 3.8 A letter was sent to all Clatt residents informing them that there had been no P1 enrolments or expressions of interest during the Primary 1 admission period for Clatt School. An invite was extended to all residents and local elected members to attend a follow on engagement meeting as part of the option appraisal process, with Education and Children's Services officers on 26 March 2024.
- 3.9 The meeting to discuss the option appraisal on 26 March 2024 was held at Clatt Village Hall and was attended by approximately six members of the community. Members of the community expressed concern that a decision was being taken too quickly and further opportunities should be given to make the school viable. It was agreed that a further deadline would be set to allow the community extra time to encourage any families who were interested in attending Clatt School to come forward and to allow the community to advertise the benefits of attending Clatt School. Officers stipulated that the children would need to be in the catchment area for Clatt School and they would need to be able to attend the school for at least two academic sessions from August 2024 - July 2026. Interested parties were asked to contact Learning Estates directly by 15 May 2024, this date was set to allow enough time to organise staffing for the start of the August school session should there be sufficient interest.
- 3.10 At the meeting officers explained that a Place and Wellbeing Assessment would be carried out using the tool developed by the Improvement Service. The community was advised that there would be opportunities for them to participate in the assessment to ensure that the impact upon the village and its residents was understood.
- 3.11 There was one note of interest in May 2024 from a family planning on moving into the Clatt School catchment area later this year. A letter was sent on 21 May 2024 to all residents in Clatt informing them that there had not been sufficient interest in order to make the school educationally and socially viable for the children to allow for the school to re-open. As Clatt School has been mothballed for two years, the residents were informed that Education and Children's Services officers were preparing a proposal to close Clatt School under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the report would be considered at Education and Children's Services Committee later this year. The letter stated that if the proposal is agreed by the committee, then a statutory consultation will be launched and all stakeholders will be fully engaged throughout the process.

#### **4. Examination of Alternatives**

- 4.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternative to closure. The alternatives to closure would be:
- to re-open Clatt School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or

- to continue with the current mothballing arrangement

4.2 The survey contained a range of questions such as if Clatt School were to re-open, would you wish your child(ren) to attend, is there anything you think that Aberdeenshire Council could do to encourage families to enrol at Clatt School to help the school reopen, it also gave respondents the opportunity to suggest potential alternative uses for the building. Respondents suggested alternatives to closure. These were assessed during the option appraisal process. The suggestions included:

- A few respondents suggested the building become a stand-alone nursery
- If the hall/dining room could be removed, relocate it elsewhere for use.
- 'As Clatt Village Hall does not get much use, I can't see a use for the school as it is would be of any use to the community therefore probably sell it for a private dwelling.'
- Day centre for senior citizens to attend for a hot meal or social activities
- Use the building for a local shop which would help in the winter to save travelling to Huntly, Insch or Alford
- Use as a multi-site school for Kennethmont School or for P1-3 children
- The school could be bought from the council or leased by a trust formed by the village and used as holiday accommodation/hostel and managed by the community

4.3 The responses received via email after the drop in session suggested a dual zone with Kennethmont School and that the people of Kennethmont are given the chance to place their children in Clatt School.

4.4 The suggestion to operate the building as a multi-site school for Kennethmont or a dual zone to allow the children in Kennethmont to attend Clatt School would not be explored further as the capacity of Kennethmont School is sufficient for the expected number of children from the Clatt catchment area.

4.5 The suggestions regarding the operation of a nursery at Clatt School would not fit with the Aberdeenshire Council model for Early Years. There is already sufficient provision across the Huntly Cluster and a stand-alone nursery would not be a priority for the Early Years Service.

4.6 As the other suggestions do not involve operating the building as a primary school for local pupils, they would not be a viable alternative to closure.

4.7 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required to the most appropriate way to re-zone the school catchment area. Further discussion of this is included within the options in Section 7 of this report.

4.8 The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out throughout the proposal document and the option appraisal assessment.

## **5. Clatt School**

5.1 The roll at Clatt School had been monitored by Learning Estates Officers for a number of years. The school roll dropped from 18 pupils in 2016 to eight pupils

in 2020. On 7 February 2022 the roll at Clatt School was six pupils. More than half of these children were in the upper stages of primary school in P4-P7. The School Roll Forecast indicated that there would only be five pupils on roll for August 2022 and did not show an increase at Clatt School.

- 5.2 The Criteria and Parameters for Mothballing a School report approved at Education and Children's Services Committee on [7 October 2021](#) sets out the criteria that must be followed when a school reaches a certain number of pupils on roll. When a primary school roll falls to eight or fewer pupils and an analysis of the school roll forecast does not indicate that there will be sufficient in zone pupils to increase the roll above eight pupils in future years, the Director of Education and Children's Services may consider mothballing the school.
- 5.3 In March 2022, due to the decrease of pupil numbers on roll at Clatt School and the forecast indicating the numbers were not due to rise to eight or above for the next two years, the Director of Education and Children's Services made the decision to mothball the school from August 2022.
- 5.4 On 21 April 2022, staff at Clatt School and parents of the children attending Clatt School were informed by the Head of Education and Chief Education Officer, of the intention to mothball Clatt School from August 2022. Officers supported the families and staff through the mothballing process and pupils were successfully accommodated at other schools of their choice. Alternative arrangements for staff were also identified in line with their contracts.

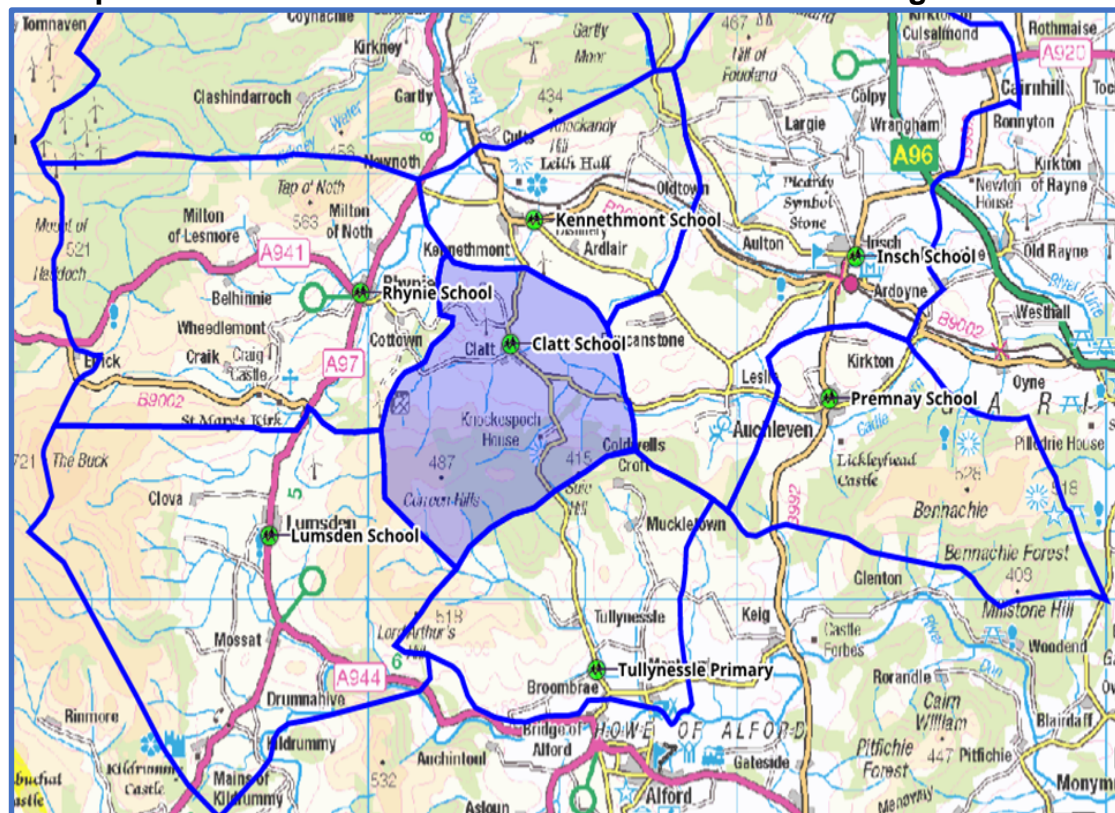
#### Current Details

- 5.5 The Huntly Cluster consists of 11 primary schools, Cairney, Clatt, Drumblade, Forge, Glass, Gordon Primary, Inch, Kennethmont, Largue, Premnay and Rhynie. Each of these schools are within the catchment area for The Gordon Schools. Pupils living in the catchment areas for Inch School and Premnay School have the option to attend either The Gordon Schools or Inverurie Community Campus.
- 5.6 Clatt School is located within the village of Clatt, Huntly, AB54 4NY. As mentioned in 1.2 under Scottish Government guidelines Clatt School is classed as "remote rural".
- 5.7 Clatt School is a non-denominational school, built in the nineteenth century and was renovated in 1985. In 1995 an extension was completed which added a new general purpose space (GP Space).
- 5.8 Clatt School has a capacity of 50 pupils. The accommodation of the school consists of a shared GP space with servery/dining area, library, and open plan classroom. The outdoor area has a concrete playground with some play equipment and a small garden with sections for planting.
- 5.9 The school delivered primary education from P1-P7. There is no nursery on site and local children often attended nursery at other nearby schools or private nursery settings. The school did not operate a breakfast club or after school club out with school hours.



- 5.10 The Clatt School catchment shares a border with Kennethmont School, Rhynie School, Lumsden School and Tullynessle School. Lumsden School and Tullynessle School are within the Alford Cluster. Map 1 below shows the catchment area of Clatt School and the surrounding schools.

**Map 1 – Catchment area for Clatt School and surrounding schools**



- 5.11 When Clatt School was last in operation, the staffing complement was as follows:
- Head Teacher
  - Pupil Support Assistant
  - Administration
  - Visiting Specialist
  - Senior Catering Assistant
- 5.12 If the school was to re-open with one class, the staffing entitlements would be comparable. This would be dependent upon actual school roll and in line with the Aberdeenshire Teacher Staffing Standard.
- 5.13 ASN teaching and pupil support staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the Huntly Cluster.
- 5.14 Every local authority in Scotland is required to grade their schools for condition and suitability. The gradings range from A to D for each category with the following values:
- A: Good – Performing well and operating efficiently (85-100%)
  - B: Satisfactory – Performing adequately but with minor problems (60-85%)
  - C: Poor – Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (40- 60%)

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

Clatt School is graded as a B (81.41%) for suitability and B (68.30%) for condition.

## **6. Details of the Proposal**

6.1 The Council proposes that Clatt School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be implemented at the conclusion of the consultation process. The Council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils living within the Clatt School catchment should continue their education at the schools they are currently attending. If the proposals are implemented any siblings of these current pupils would be able to join their brother/sister(s) at the same school.

6.2 The school catchment area would be reassigned to one of the neighbouring primary schools. Discussion of these options is set out in Section 7.

Option 1 – Close Clatt School and merge with Kennethmont School

Option 2 – Close Clatt School and merge with Rhynie School

### **Discounted options and alternatives to closure**

Option 3 – Close Clatt School and create a dual zone between Kennethmont School and Rhynie School

Option 4 – Close Clatt School and merge with Premnay School

Option 5 – Close Clatt School and merge with Insch School

Option 6 – Close Clatt School and merge with Lumsden School

Option 7 – Close Clatt School and merge with Tullynessle School

**Alternative 1** – Re-open Clatt School with the current catchment area

**Alternative 2** – Re-open Clatt School with an expanded catchment area

**Alternative 3** – Continuation of mothballing of Clatt School

Details of the Council's consideration of the discounted options is set out in Section 8 and the alternatives in Section 9.

6.3 Alternative uses for the building will be further explored with the community during the consultation period and beyond. Several potential uses have been suggested by the community and officers will support individuals or groups who wish to take them forward.

6.4 It is important that this proposal does not have a negative impact on any children currently attending schools affected by this proposal and that they have continuity in their education.

- 6.5 All schools considered in this report as possible options are non-denominational and under Scottish government guidelines classed as a “remote rural area”, meaning that it is located in a settlement with a population of less than 3,000 people not within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 people or more.
- 6.6 The options identified above would have minimal impact on the school rolls of Kennethmont School and Rhynie School. Table 1 below details the current roll and capacity of each school affected by this proposal and the forecast roll for the next four years based on live data which includes current information on placing requests, P1 admissions, housing numbers and NHS data.  
The 2023 based published school roll forecasts can be viewed at: <https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/admissions/school-roll-forecasts/>

**Table 1 – 2024 Live School Roll Forecast**

School	Suitability Rating	Condition Rating	Capacity	Current Roll (July 24)	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Clatt School	B	B	50	0	0	0	0	0
Kennethmont School	A	B	75	60	61	55	56	56
Rhynie School	B	B	71	34	38	36	34	35

## 7. Option Assessment

- 7.1 Officers applied an approved methodology to assess the identified options. The SWOT analysis used is attached as Appendix A1.
- 7.2 Together with each school's baseline score and outcome of the option appraisal matrix, the other aspects that were taken into account to formulate the overall recommendations are:
- Early Years
  - Transport
  - Road Network
  - Outcome of surveys representing the views of the Clatt School parents/carers and the catchment area residents
  - Environmental impact
  - Learning Estate sustainability
- 7.3 Table 2 below shows the highest top two ranking options.

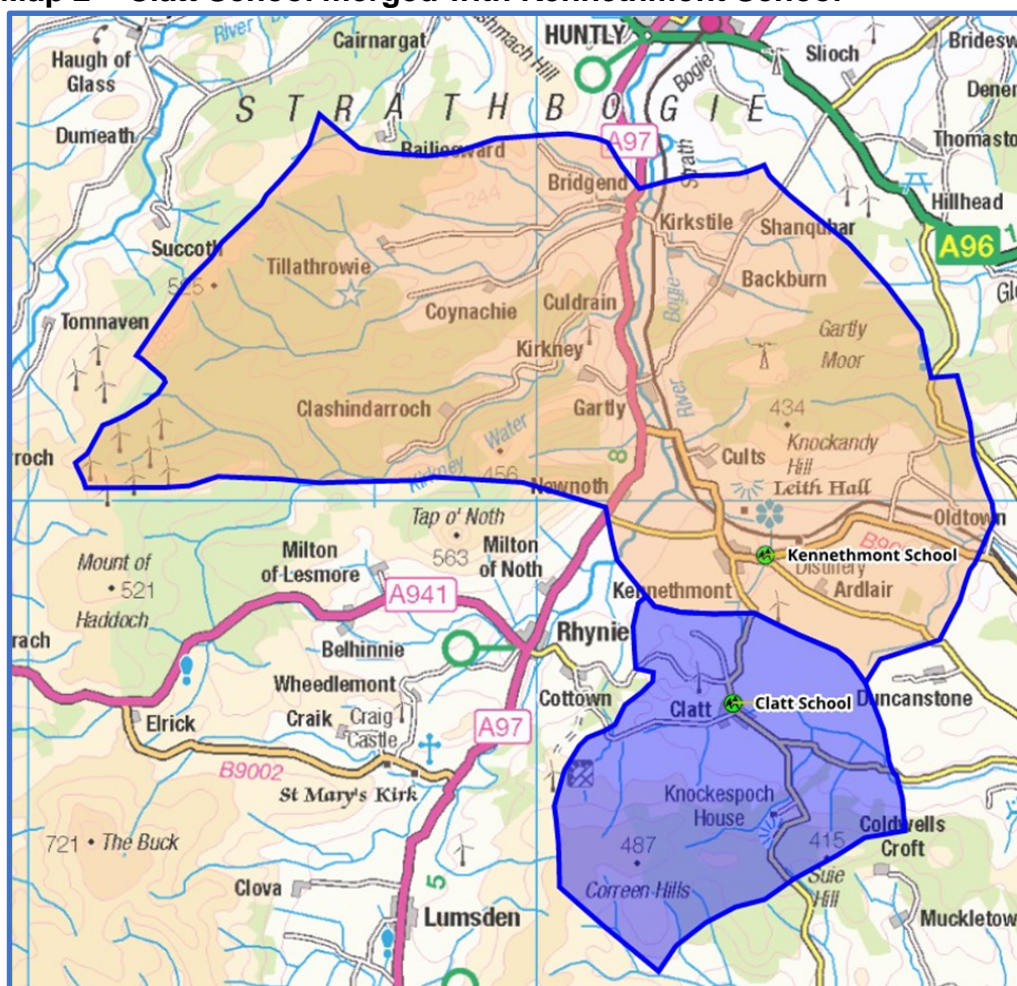
**Table 2 – Outcome of option appraisal**

Options
<b>Option 1</b> – Close Clatt School and merge with Kennethmont School
<b>Option 2</b> – Close Clatt School and merge with Rhynie School

## 7.4 Option 1 – Close Clatt School and merge with Kennethmont School

7.4.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown in Map 2 below.

**Map 2 – Clatt School merged with Kennethmont School**



7.4.2 The Kennethmont School catchment area includes the village of Kennethmont and the surrounding rural area, it also includes the area previously zoned to Gartly School which is a dual zone area with Rhynie School. Kennethmont School is located approximately 2.5 miles from Clatt School and 13 miles from the town of Huntly. During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Clatt School catchment area.

7.4.3 Kennethmont School offers primary education from P1 to P7. The school has a capacity of 75 and a pupil roll of 60 (as of July 2024). This is distributed across three classrooms. The building consists of a GP/dining hall, three classrooms, staffroom and kitchen. The kitchen provided lunches to Clatt School when it was operational. The outdoor facilities include concrete playground with a shelter shed, outdoor musical instruments, wooden play equipment and access to the community grassed play area with various play equipment. Outdoor learning is undertaken in the playground using the planters, the nearby wood and also in the grounds of Leith Hall which is accessed via the community park.



- 7.4.4 The Kennethmont School Parent Partnership organise and run an after school club on Friday afternoons. Dreams Daycare in Inch also provide a private local after school provision and arrange to collect some of the children from Kennethmont School on the other days of the week.
- 7.4.5 The live school roll forecast suggests pupil numbers decrease from an expected 61 in 2024/25 to 56 in 2027/28. This currently represents an 81% use of capacity, decreasing to 75% in 2027. The class structure for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 session is shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 – Kennethmont School Class Structure**

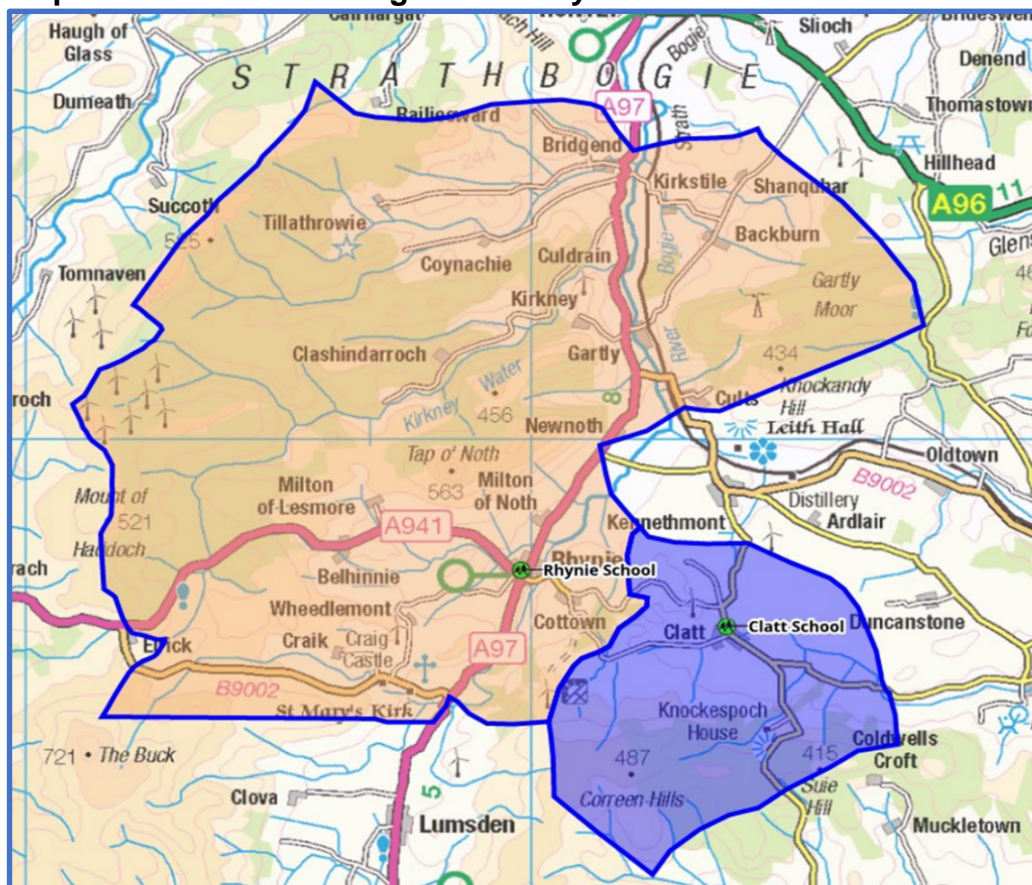
2023/24	Expected 2024/25
P1-P2 <b>21</b>	P1/2/3 <b>21</b>
P3/4/5 <b>19</b>	P3/4/5 <b>22</b>
P5/6/7 <b>20</b>	P6/7 <b>18</b>

- 7.4.6 During the 2023/24 session school transport was provided to seven pupils from the Clatt catchment area to Kennethmont School.
- 7.4.7 Kennethmont School is currently assessed as A (89%) for Suitability (good – performing well and operating efficiently: school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services) and B (69%) for Condition (satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).
- 7.4.8 The vast majority of pupils from the Clatt catchment area currently attend either Kennethmont School or Rhynie School, therefore the permanent closure of Clatt School is not expected to have adverse effects for Kennethmont School.

## **7.5 Option 2 – Close Clatt School and merge with Rhynie School**

- 7.5.1 The proposed catchment area for this option is shown in Map 3 below.
- 7.5.2 The Rhynie School catchment contains the village of Rhynie and extends to the Tap O'Noth in the north and borders Cabrach in the west and also includes the area which was previously zoned for Gartly School. This area is now a dual zone with Kennethmont School. Rhynie School is located in the village of Rhynie which is approximately 3.5 miles from Clatt School and 11 miles south of Huntly. During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Clatt School catchment area.

**Map 3 – Clatt School merged with Rhynie School**



- 7.5.3 Rhynie School offers primary education from P1 to P7. The building is a single storey accommodation and consists of three classrooms, a General Purpose Hall suitable for P.E / dining and a nursery. There is a spacious playground with markings for games, a 'hang out hut', flower planters and various play equipment. The school have a variety of opportunities for outdoor learning, including vegetable patches, mud kitchen, an outdoor classroom, outdoor hut, potting shed and also utilise the local park and playing field. The school also have the use Moss Wood on the outskirts of Rhynie for outdoor learning. This is a three acre site which was regenerated in a joint project between Rhynie School, Aberdeenshire Council, the BBC Beechgrove Garden team, Tap O'Noth Community Council and various other local community groups and individuals.
- 7.5.4 Rhynie School hosts the local bowling club weekly in the winter and also for some weekend festivals.
- 7.5.5 The school has a capacity for 71 pupils and a current roll of 34 (July 2024). This is distributed across two classes. The live school roll forecast suggests pupil numbers decrease from 38 in 2024 to 35 in 2027. This currently represents a 53% use of capacity, decreasing to 50% in 2027. The class structure for the 2023/24 and the 2024/25 session is shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 – Rhynie School Class Structure**

2023/24	Expected 2024/25
P1-P3 <b>16</b>	P1-P4 <b>18</b>
P4-P7 <b>18</b>	P4-P7 <b>20</b>

- 7.5.6 Rhynie School has a nursery with 18 children currently attending the setting.
- 7.5.7 Rhynie School is currently assessed as B (82%) for Suitability (good – performing well and operating efficiently: school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services) and B (71%) for Condition (satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).
- 7.5.8 During the 2023/24 session school transport was provided to five pupils from the Clatt catchment area to Rhynie School.
- 7.5.9 The vast majority of pupils from the Clatt catchment area currently attend either Rhynie School or Kennethmont School, therefore the permanent closure of Clatt School is not expected to have adverse effects for Rhynie School.

## **8. Discounted Options**

- 8.1 The detail of the Council's consideration of the discounted options is set out below:

**Option 3** – Close Clatt School and create a dual zone between Kennethmont School and Rhynie School

Creating a dual zone between Kennethmont School and Rhynie School would be against Aberdeenshire Council Learning Estates Strategy, which states that no new dual catchment areas will be created due to challenges that the Council faces with existing dual zones, including additional transport costs and vehicles, increase in emissions as well as the planning of school places and staffing for secondary schools.

**Option 4** – Close Clatt School and merge with Premnay School

Premnay School was considered as an option due to the relative proximity to the Clatt catchment area and the size of the school, however, it would require children to be transported through the hamlet of Leslie which is in the Inch School catchment area in order to attend Premnay School. Part of the route is on a single track road which may not be suitable for school transport purposes in adverse weather conditions. Premnay School is also dual zone for secondary provision between The Gordon Schools and Inverurie Academy.

**Option 5** – Close Clatt School and merge with Inch School

If Clatt School was to close and merge with Inch School it would be a significant change in school profile from small rural school to a larger school which would go against parental expectations.

Merging Clatt School with Inch School scored poorly in the option appraisal assessment using the SWOT methodology due to the increase in travel time/distance and cost, the change of school profile and it would be against parental expectations.

**Option 6** – Close Clatt School and merge with Lumsden School

The Lumsden School catchment contains a historic dual zone where the pupils living in the northern part of the primary school catchment are entitled to attend either The Gordon Schools or Alford Academy whilst pupils living in the southern part of the catchment attend Alford Academy.

Merging Clatt with Lumsden School scored poorly in the option appraisal assessment using the SWOT methodology due a number of reasons, including the increase in travel time/distance and cost, it would not help to address capacity issues, would be against parental expectations and a change of academy catchment. Children would also be travelling through Rhynie to get to Lumsden School.

### **Option 7 – Close Clatt School and merge with Tullynessle School**

If Clatt pupils were zoned for Tullynessle School for primary education but remained zoned to The Gordon Schools for their secondary education, they would be in the position of attending a different secondary school to the majority of their peers at Tullynessle School who would be zoned to Alford Academy. A further statutory consultation would be required to change the secondary school catchment areas.

Merging Clatt with Tullynessle School scored poorly on the option appraisal matrix using the SWOT methodology as it would be against parental expectations, would not address capacity issues, there would be an increase in travel time/distance and cost, it would also be considered unreasonable travel due to the road network between the two schools which would involve travel over Suie Hill which can be hazardous in adverse weather conditions, and it would be a change of academy catchment. Since considering Tullynessle School as part of the option appraisal, the school has been mothballed due to low pupil numbers.

- 8.2 There have been no suggestions put forward by members of the community asking us to consider a split in the catchment area between Rhynie School and Kennethmont School therefore this is not an option which has been considered and discounted. However, if there is feedback from the parents received during the statutory consultation process that indicates a desire for a split catchment it could be considered. The geography of the catchment would suggest a split where the area south of the village is zoned to Rhynie and the north including the village of Clatt could be zoned to Kennethmont School. This is based on a high level assessment of the location of pupils and the schools they have chosen to attend during the mothballing process and the road layout. There would however be school transport implications with different contracts required.

## **9. Alternatives to the Proposal**

- 9.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure.
- 9.2 During the community engagement session, officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure. The online survey allowed participants to present alternatives to the closure with a deadline of 30 November 2023.



9.3 The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out below.

#### **9.4 Re-opening of Clatt School with the Current Catchment Area**

9.4.1 During the 2018/19 school session there were 14 pupils on roll at Clatt School. Due to low P1 intake and parents submitting placing requests out of the school to nearby local schools' the roll declined to eight pupils in 2020 and six pupils in 2021.

9.4.2 There are currently 12 children of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of Clatt School (SEEMIS extract from June 2024). These children all attend other schools in the Huntly Cluster, some through placement when Clatt School was mothballed and others through parental choice before the school was mothballed. The majority attend either Kennethmont School or Rhynie School.

9.4.3 There are no planned housing developments in the Local Development Plan for the catchment area of Clatt School, therefore there is no prospect of generating enough new pupils in the area to make the roll viable and allow the school to be reinstated.

9.4.4 As previously stated in Section 3, the school has not been operational since August 2022. Aberdeenshire Council sought enrolments to the school for the 2023/24 session. One family expressed an interest in their children enrolling at the school.

9.4.5 The registration period for school places for the term 2024/25 was open between 15 and 19 January 2024. It was communicated on the Aberdeenshire Council website that all families living in the Clatt School, catchment area are still entitled, if interested, to select their catchment school as an option on the P1 admissions form even though the school is currently mothballed. No P1 applications were received. It therefore appears unlikely at present that the school would not reach a roll that would support learning and teaching.

9.4.6 Aberdeenshire Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching and make the re-opening of Clatt School an unviable option.

#### **9.5 Re-opening of Clatt School with Expanded Catchment Area**

9.5.1 A catchment review to increase the potential roll and sustainability of a school can be a sensible option in some cases. However, this would have to be achieved with no detrimental impact on affected schools as a result.

9.5.2 Consideration has been given to extending the Clatt catchment area. As shown above in Map 1 within Section 5, the school borders with Kennethmont School, Rhynie School, Inch School and Premnay School within the Huntly Cluster and Lumsden School and Tullynessle School within the Alford Cluster. The north part of the Lumsden School primary catchment is a dual zone with The Gordon Schools and Alford Academy for secondary provision.

9.5.3 If the Clatt catchment area was extended to incorporate part of the Kennethmont

School catchment, it would need to extend past Kennethmont School in order to generate enough children to make the Clatt School roll viable.

- 9.5.4 Extending the Clatt School catchment area to the north and west to incorporate part of the Rhynie School catchment may have a negative impact on the sustainability of that school as it already operates below 60% capacity. It would also need to extend to the village of Rhynie where the school is located, in order to generate enough children to make the plan viable.
- 9.5.5 The geographical location of Tullynessle School in relation to the Clatt catchment area would mean children being transported over the Suie Hill if the Clatt catchment was extended to the south. In adverse weather conditions this may not be possible. The limited number of children potentially generated would not be enough to sustain the roll at Clatt School. Tullynessle School is being mothballed from August 2024 due to a low roll. Tullynessle School is also part of Alford Cluster with children attending Alford Academy for secondary provision, this would not be conducive for a smooth transition process to secondary school for the children living in the Clatt catchment area and may require a further statutory consultation to rezone the secondary school catchment areas as the Clatt area is currently zoned to The Gordon Schools.
- 9.5.6 As with the above scenarios, if the Clatt catchment area was extended to the south and west to incorporate part of the Lumsden catchment area, it would require the zone to be extended past the location of Lumsden School in order to generate enough children to make Clatt School viable. The route to get to Clatt School from Lumsden would also require children to be transported through the village of Rhynie, close to the location of the school and would be a minimum distance of approximately 7.5 miles. The north part of the Lumsden School catchment area is a dual zone between The Gordon Schools and Alford Academy for secondary provision.
- 9.5.7 Extending the catchment to incorporate the southern part of the Inch School catchment area, namely the hamlet of Leslie and the Duncanstone area, would require children to be transported on a single track road which may cause problems in adverse weather conditions and would not generate enough pupils to allow for a viable roll to re-open Clatt School. According to our records there are less than five children of P1-P7 age living in the aforementioned areas.
- 9.5.8 If the Clatt catchment area was extended to incorporate part of the Premnay School catchment area, it would mean also having to rezone the southern part of the Inch catchment area (Duncanstone and Leslie area as detailed above) as this is located in between Auchleven and Clatt. Premnay School is located in the village of Auchleven and the majority of children attending Premnay School live within the village. There would be the same potential transport issues as mentioned in 9.5.7 and would be against parental expectations.
- 9.5.9 On the basis of the assessments in 9.5.3 to 9.5.8 it would not be possible to extend the catchment area of Clatt School sufficiently to result in a viable pupil population without impacting negatively on neighbouring schools.

## **9.6 Continuation of Mothballing**

- 9.6.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current mothballing arrangement, Aberdeenshire Council does not consider that this would be the best option for the Clatt community. Mothballing would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school.
- 9.6.2 Scottish Government guidance relating to the mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation.
- 9.6.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing. New pupils either reaching school age or moving into the catchment area, who attend the designated schools would be entitled to school transport. Those pupils who chose out of zone placements to other schools whilst Clatt School was still operational are not entitled to school transport.
- 9.6.4 Following the completion of the Place and Wellbeing Assessment it is clear that the community would like alternative uses of the building to be progressed. This cannot be achieved if the school remains mothballed.
- 9.6.5 The Council would also be responsible for the costs of maintaining a mothballed building.

## **10. Educational Benefit Statement**

- 10.1 In September 2019, Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting, People, Places and Learning' was launched. This was developed by Scottish Government and COSLA and contains ten guiding principles. Local authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate namely;
  - Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
  - Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions of all learners;
  - The learning estate should be well managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
  - The condition and suitability of learning environment should support and enhance their function;
  - Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle;

- Learning environment should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling and be digitally enabled;
  - Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environment should be maximised;
  - Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes;
  - Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential;
  - Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- 10.2 An update to the Aberdeenshire Learning Estate Strategy was approved by Education and Children's Services Committee on 1 February 2024. The Council's strategy sets the minimum standards for the various elements of educational buildings to achieve optimal educational benefit. The amended strategy for Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estate sets out four values, Excellence, Inclusion, Sustainable Estate and Equity, which are core to all decision making.
- 10.3 If Clatt School was to re-open, with a reduced number of pupils over a greater age range, there would be increased challenges in ensuring that all children develop the four capacities of Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors.
- 10.4 A small school roll made up of one or a few year groups significantly diminishes sustainability and viability of a school, offers less opportunities to learners which results in a negative impact on their educational and social development.
- 10.5 There are concerns that pupils' educational development may not be as successful as it could be, if opportunities to work closely, regularly and frequently with peers of the same age are limited.
- 10.6 Isolation for some pupils', due to no connection with peers of the same age or sex in a school with an extremely small roll may have a negative impact on their social development.
- 10.7 The proposal would provide improved opportunities for children to develop skills for learning, life and work e.g. increasing opportunities for working with others of a similar age and stage which are very limited in schools of less than eight children in a multi-composite setting.
- 10.8 While it may seem that having fewer children in a class would allow a teacher to provide more one-on-one attention, in this case fewer means limited pupils' learning experiences. Classes very low in pupil numbers have disadvantages,

which are further compounded when a school has a single class, potentially with only one or two children at each year stage.

- 10.9 While one or two children absent from a large class isn't a major issue, a small number of absent pupils can make a significant difference in a small class. If there are only eight pupils in a class, two missing pupils represent a much larger percentage of the class population, making it more difficult for the teacher to continue with planned lessons.
- 10.10 This will 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.
- 10.11 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.
- 10.12 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.
- 10.13 Some pupils enjoy the anonymity associated with being a member of a larger class and school. 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 with their peer group.
- 10.14 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.
- 10.15 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. Rhynie School and Kennethmont School have 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 group working allows pupils to develop different skills from those that are developed during individual work.

- 10.16 Within larger schools, pupils will have the opportunity to develop wider relationships and friendships which will see them better prepared to meet the social and learning opportunities and challenges ahead in the context of a secondary school with a roll of around 700 pupils. This is important in terms of developing their education through their school journey.
- 10.17 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.
- 10.18 Educational benefits are considered below for pupils if either of the options mentioned in Section 7 are adopted.
- 10.19 Pupils at both Rhynie School and Kennethmont School regularly work in cooperative learning groups. A cooperative learning strategy normally involves four pupils of roughly the same age group working together collaboratively. If Clatt School re-opened with a low roll that would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static and there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. The pupils may not be of a similar age and could be spread across P1-P7. A low roll would further limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.
- 10.20 A larger school roll offers children from the Clatt School catchment area an increased possibility of participating in teams in a range of games. These educational, cultural and sporting activities provide a number of benefits for children in terms of both academic and social development and support the process of transition towards the larger and more varied educational setting of a secondary school. The children from Rhynie School and Kennethmont School participate in rugby and cricket festivals. There is also an extra-curricular netball club at Kennethmont School, who participate in the local tournaments throughout the year.
- 10.21 Pupils at Rhynie School and Kennethmont School can participate in various activities and events across the year such as school shows, Christmas concerts, sports day, art exhibitions. There are opportunities for educational visits which support learning. Kennethmont School have arranged visits to the Wild West Village at Forge, HM Theatre, Orbs Bookshop in Huntly who have previously visited the school with a Pop Up shop which was also open to the local Mother and Toddler Group. The primary seven children have visited Edinburgh this year and a trip to Lochter is also planned. The school host a bake sale linked with the school library and have held various events for World Book Day. The school often organise for workshops to be held in the school such as Travelling by Tuba, a science workshop during British Science Week by a lecturer from NESCOL and various others throughout the school year. Rhynie School have organised various day trips with the most recent being to the Lecht Ski Centre and Macduff Aquarium. The school also organises charity coffee shop mornings, organises author visits for World Book Day and hosts a monthly community café.
- 10.22 A larger school roll can afford children the opportunity to participate in a range of groups such as Rights Respecting School groups, Eco-Committee, a buddy

system and playground leaders. Kennethmont School have a library working group, playground leaders and an informal buddy system. The children at Rhynie School can participate in Community Café groups, Pupil Council, a Librarian group, Rights Respecting School group and can be Play Leaders.

- 10.23 Some of the educational benefits arise not from larger pupil numbers (e.g., to form teams of similar age and size), but also because a larger staff and parent body increases the likelihood of interested adults leading a range of activities.
- 10.24 It is Aberdeenshire Council's view that the pupils from the Clatt School catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at the larger neighbouring schools. Formalising the current arrangements would provide several such benefits, judged against both the Aberdeenshire and National criteria set out above.
- 10.25 The majority of pupils from the Clatt catchment area currently attend other neighbouring schools in the Huntly Cluster. No adverse effects for those pupils are expected to arise from the permanent closure of Clatt School.

## **11. Effect on the Local Community**

- 11.1 Aberdeenshire Council recognise that the uncertainty surrounding the future opening of the school has impacted the community and it is hoped that this statutory consultation to close Clatt School will give clarity to the community and a sense of certainty regarding their children's education.
- 11.2 The option appraisal process has identified a number of alternative uses for the school. Aberdeenshire Council would be happy to work with the local community to see whether the school building could be suitable for community use. Some members of the community expressed concerns regarding the provision of social engagements particularly for the older residents which were often provided by activities organised by the PTA. These concerns have been noted and a Place and Wellbeing Assessment has been undertaken with members of the community and key stakeholders to assess the impact of the school mothballing and proposed closure on the community. The report from the Place and Wellbeing Assessment is being prepared. Once completed it will be shared on the Learning Estates Engage Hub: <https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/hub-page/ecs-learning-estates> and will be considered alongside all responses to the consultation.
- 11.3 Aberdeenshire Council has an Asset Disposal Policy which must be followed when buildings or land are no longer required for their original purpose. There could be opportunities for the site to be developed for community use. This would have to be fully assessed through the asset disposal procedure. Thereafter any surplus council sites can be subject to a Community Asset Transfer Application.

## **12. School Transport**

- 12.1 There were no school transport contracts to Clatt School prior to mothballing.

- 12.2 In line with the Aberdeenshire Council Learning Estates Strategy, where practicable, primary pupils are not expected to have to travel for more than 45 minutes on school transport. The majority of school transport journeys for primary school pupils are significantly shorter than this maximum limit.
- 12.3 The closure of Clatt School would not impact the journey times for pupils as they are currently being transported to other schools. However, the additional travel time compared to travelling to/from Clatt School to either Kennethmont School or Rhynie School for pupils currently attending these schools and pre-school children residing in the Clatt School catchment area is an approximate increase between five to eight minutes one way in normal conditions for those living south of the school location. This depends on the pupils' home address.
- 12.4 There is one mainstream contract transporting eight pupils (seven of whom are children living in the Clatt School catchment area) to Kennethmont School at a cost of £121.26 per day and one mainstream contract transporting six pupils who live in the catchment area for Clatt School to Rhynie School at a cost of £134.37 per day.
- 12.5 In the event of closure, all pupils within the Clatt catchment area would be entitled to school transport should they choose to attend the designated school, there would be no cost implications to families affected by the closure. A permanent closure would continue to have little impact in this respect on costs to the Council or distance covered by vehicles.

### **13. Financial Implications**

- 13.1 As mentioned in Section 12 above the proposed changes could result in an increase in costs for school transport provision, which would need to be met by Aberdeenshire Council. However, the increase will not be significant.
- 13.2 Further details of the financial impact of this proposal are included in the financial template provided in Appendix A2. The costs provided in the template are from the 2022/23 session when the school was last operational for a full session.

### **14. Sustainability**

- 14.1 The Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions for the schools considered in this proposal document are detailed in Table 5 below. The permanent closure of Clatt School would result in a reduction of around 22 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually and would not increase the emissions at either school.

**Table 5 – CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions**

School	Annual CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions	Impacted by permanent closure of Clatt School
Clatt School	22	Yes
Kennethmont School	30	No
Rhynie School	41	No

- 14.2 There is little negative environmental impact in relation to the transport of pupils due to the relatively short distances and small numbers involved. Clatt School



pupils will be transported to Kennethmont School or Rhynie School by the Council, rather than travelling individually, as they did through placing requests and transport contracts are in place already.

- 14.3 The negative impact on the environment due to the transport required, will be outweighed by the closure of Clatt School, as the school would still require heating, electricity and maintenance to remain operational for a very small pupil roll. There will also be a reduction in individual parental journeys as more children will be entitled to school transport.
- 14.4 The travel distance from Clatt School to Kennethmont School and Rhynie School is approximately 2.5 miles and 3.5 miles respectively. Children residing in the Clatt School catchment area are already transported to alternative schools by the authority provided transport and this would not change if this proposal were not accepted.
- 14.5 Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced by many rural authorities in Scotland. Rural schools with a small number of pupils on roll changes the teaching dynamic, requiring teachers to be highly adept in managing the curriculum, differentiation and assessment for pupils from Primary 1-7 in one or just two classes to ensure an educational benefit is maintained. Due to the staffing complement within these establishments the opportunities for collegiate and stage partner working requires careful planning with local schools and increased use of digital resources to allow online communities, however some rural settings also have connectivity difficulties.

## **15. Implications for Staff**

- 15.1 As Clatt School is already mothballed there will be no impact on staffing arrangements at Kennethmont School or Rhynie School from a formal closure of Clatt School. All staff previously based at Clatt School are either employed at other establishments or have resigned from their posts within Aberdeenshire Council. A continuation of mothballing would also not have an impact upon staffing.
- 15.2 The staffing implications of re-opening Clatt School are set out in Section 5 above, and the financial implications are set out in Appendix A2.
- 15.3 The current staffing allocation with Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for each school is set out below in Table 6.

**Table 6 – Staffing Levels for Clatt School, Kennethmont School and Rhynie School**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Clatt School (if re-opened)</b>	<b>Kennethmont School</b>	<b>Premnay School</b>	<b>Rhynie School</b>
<b>Head Teacher</b>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
<b>Teacher</b>	-	2.00	1.00	1.00
<b>Management Time</b>	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
<b>Non Class Contact Time</b>	0.11	0.33	0.22	0.22
<b>Pupil Support Assistant</b>	0.73	1.47	0.95	0.71
<b>Administrator</b>	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35
<b>Admin Support Assistant</b>	0.24	0.27	0.27	0.31
<b>Senior Catering Assistant</b>	0.33	0.81	0.60	0.81
<b>Catering Assistant</b>	-	0.54	-	0.40
<b>Janitor</b>	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.05
<b>Cleaner</b>	0.20	0.32	0.32	0.41
<b>Early Years Lead Practitioner</b>	-	-	-	1.00
<b>Early Years Practitioner</b>	-	-	-	2.41
<b>Early Years Senior Practitioner (shared with Drumblade)</b>	-	-	-	1.00
<b>Modern Apprentice Early Years</b>	-	-	-	1.00
<b>Early years Support Worker (shared with Drumblade)</b>	-	-	-	1.00

15.3 Additional Support Needs (ASN) teaching and pupil support staff are allocated to each school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the cluster.

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

## **16. Equal Opportunities**

16.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a statutory requirement of the Council to assess the policies and practices necessary to meet the requirements of anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. It also affords an opportunity for the Council to consider the impact on the education service. An IIA has been carried out and is attached as Appendix C.

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

- 16.3 The main adverse effect for children within P1-P7 is the length of journey from Clatt School to either Kennethmont or Rhynie School, however as the school has been mothballed since August 2022, all the current pupils are already making this journey to either school.
- 16.4 Funded school transport would be provided for all P1-P7 pupils attending either Kennethmont School or Rhynie School who reside within the catchment area of Clatt School if approved.
- 16.5 Although funded school transport is not provided for nursery age children, many of these children have already been attending the early years setting at Rhynie School. The journey time involved is not lengthy in comparison to those faced by many other primary and nursery age children in Aberdeenshire.
- 16.6 As part of the consultation process the Council will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, parents/carers and young people, and will address comments regarding equality during this consultation.
- 16.7 Under the Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Existing arrangements in place for pupils within the schools affected with additional support needs will continue.

## **17. Consultation Arrangements**

- 17.1 At its meeting on 29 August 2024, Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee were asked to agree that a proposal document should be issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in the paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.
- 17.2 A copy of this document will be issued to all the consultees listed on the first page of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website:  
<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/>
- 17.3 The period for consultation will extend from Wednesday 4 September 2024 until Friday 8 November 2024, which adequately covers a period of 30 days term time.
- 17.4 A public meeting will be held on Tuesday 1 October at Clatt Village Hall, AB54 4NY at 6.30pm.
- 17.5 Anyone wishing to attend the meeting is welcome. The meetings will be convened by the Council and the Council will present the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be opportunities for questions and comment at the meetings. A minute will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.
- 17.6 Opportunities will be provided for the staff working in each affected primary school to discuss the proposals, and opportunities will be arranged for all primary

pupils within the affected schools to engage in the consultation in a manner appropriate to their age.

- 17.7 An online survey will be available as part of the consultation. This can be completed at the following address or by scanning the QR code below.  
<https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/clatt-school-closure-consultation>



- 17.8 The Council will also consider any written comments which should be emailed to [LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk). Alternatively, any comments can be sent to Learning Estates Team, Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA. Any comments should be received no later than 4pm on Friday 8 November 2024.
- 17.9 A copy of this document will also be sent to Education Scotland. They will receive a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council during the consultation period. They will also receive a copy of any oral representations made at the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, they may visit the school and make such reasonable enquiries as they consider appropriate.

## **18. Consideration of Consultation Responses**

- 18.1 The Council will review the proposal having regard to the Education Scotland Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. The Council will then prepare a report on the consultation, this report will be published in electronic formats and will be available on the Council website. Anyone who has made written representations during the consultation period will be informed about the report.
- 18.2 The report will include a record of the total number of written representations made during the consultation period, a summary of the written representations and a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting. The report will also include the Authority's response to the Education Scotland Report and any other relevant information, including details of any alleged inaccuracies and how these have been handled. The report will also contain a statement explaining how the Council has complied with the requirement to review the proposal in light of the Education Scotland Report and representation (both written and oral) that has been received.
- 18.3 The last section of the report will include an officer recommendation as to whether the proposals should be adopted and implemented. The consultation report will be published at least three weeks prior to the Council making a decision.

- 18.4 The final decision is likely to be made by the Council on the proposed changes in Spring/Summer 2025.

## **19. Decision Making**

- 19.1 The consultation report will be considered the Marr Area Committee who will be asked to make a comment on the officer recommendation.
- 19.2 Following the Marr Area Committee, the Education and Children's Services Committee (ECS) will be asked to make a recommendation as to whether the proposed changes are implemented. This is expected to be in Spring 2025.
- 19.3 Following discussion and recommendation at both Marr Area Committee and the ECS Committee, Full Council will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report.
- 19.4 At the end of the consultation process, Section 15 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 enables ministers to call-in a decision to implement the proposed closure of Clatt School.
- 19.5 Beginning on the day that the final decision is taken, the Council has a period of six working days to notify Scottish Ministers of the decision. Scottish Ministers then have a period of eight weeks from and including the date of decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. The Council must publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified and that representations can be made to the Scottish Ministers within the first three weeks of the eight-week period. The Scottish Ministers will take into account any relevant representations that were made to them by any person within the first three weeks. The Council may not proceed with the implementation of the proposal until this eight-week period has passed.
- 19.6 If the Scottish Ministers decide to call in a closure proposal, it is then referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels who has a period of seven days after a call-in notice is issued to constitute a School Closure Review Panel. The Panel may decide to refuse consent to the proposal, refuse consent and remit it to the education authority for a fresh decision or grant consent to the proposal, either subject to conditions, or unconditionally. The Panel must notify the education authority of its decision within eight weeks from when the Panel was constituted or within 16 weeks if the Panel has issued a notice to the education authority that a decision has been delayed. The Council may not proceed with the implementation of the proposal until the outcome of the call-in has been notified to the Council.

## **20. Conclusion**

- 20.1 Taking the above into account Aberdeenshire Council recommends that Clatt School, which is currently mothballed, is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Kennethmont School or Rhynie School as outlined in the option one and option two in the proposal document.

- 20.2 Whichever decision is taken with respect to catchment areas, existing pupils will not be required to change schools. This will also apply to any younger siblings of such pupils, provided they remain at the same primary school.
- 20.3 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements.