



**EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**JANUARY 2026**

**PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

**CLOSURE OF KINNEFF SCHOOL  
STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

**Consultation open between  
12 January 2026 – 6 March 2026**

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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 discontinue education at Kinneff School, which is currently mothballed and re-assign its catchment to either Bervie School or Catterline School.**
- **The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in the Kinneff School catchment area.**
- **The catchment area of Bervie School or Catterline School will be permanently extended to include the catchment area of Kinneff School.**
- **The proposed change, 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, including the proposed closure of a school are subject to rigorous statutory consultation.

The schools affected by this proposal are:

**Kinneff School  
Bervie School  
Catterline 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 Kinneff School catchment area
- Parent Council of Bervie and Catterline Schools
- Parents/Carers of the pupils at Bervie and Catterline Schools
- Pupils at both Bervie and Catterline Schools
- Staff at both Bervie and Catterline Schools
- Trade Union representatives of the above staff
- Local Early Years providers
- Catterline, Kinneff and Dunnottar Community Council, Arbuthnott Community Council, Royal Burgh of Inverbervie Community Council, Gourdon Community Council, Benholm & Johnshaven Community Council, Mearns Community Council
- Local Elected Members
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMIE)

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Bervie School and Catterline School
- Inverbervie Library and Stonehaven Library
- Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB
- Learning Estates Team (call 01771 676600) or email [LearningEstates@aberdeeshire.gov.uk](mailto:LearningEstates@aberdeeshire.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 guidelines, Kinneff School is classed as an accessible rural school. All schools discussed in this document are non-denominational and are also classed as accessible rural (areas with a population of less than 3,000 and within 30 minutes drive of a settlement with a population of 10,000 or more). The Council has had regard to the provision of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, in particular the heightening considerations to be given to rural school closures.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Aberdeenshire Council strives to allocates its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible education experience for all pupils in its schools.
- 2.2 The proposal document is focused upon Kinneff School, located north of Inverbervie, in the Kincardine and Mearns Committee Area of Aberdeenshire. Kinneff School is part of the Stonehaven 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 Catterline School and Bervie School.
- 2.4 The consultation will run from 12 January to 6 March 2026. A public meeting will be held to discuss the proposal on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at Kinneff & Catterline Village Hall at 6pm.
- 2.5 The consultation arrangements for this proposal are set out in detail within section 17.

## **3. Reason for Proposal**

- 3.1 In February 2024, the Director of Education & Children's Services made the decision to mothball (temporary closure) Kinneff School as it became clear that Kinneff School roll would drop to eight pupils in the following session due to no P1 enrolments and the annual departure of P7 pupils.
- 3.2 Kinneff School roll has been monitored for many years due to the continuous low roll and the assessment of the viability of the school, educational benefits and social wellbeing of pupils.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 No children have attended Kinneff School since August 2024 when the school was officially mothballed.
- 3.5 In January 2025, the enrolment period for Primary 1 children starting school in August 2025 was held. A press release was issued on 13 January 2025 to inform families of the admission period and that anyone interested in attending any mothballed schools are entitled to do so. On the conclusion of the enrolment period there were no pupils who wished to attend Kinneff School.
- 3.6 The current proposal follows informal engagement between Aberdeenshire Council officers, local elected members, community council's within the area, parents/carers of pupils attending Catterline School and Kinneff community members.
- 3.7 Letters were sent to residents residing within the Kinneff School catchment area in March 2025 to inform them there had been no P1 enrolments or placing request applications made for the school and asked that any new families or existing families please contact Learning Estates should they wish to express an interest in returning to Kinneff School by 25 April 2025.
- 3.8 On 22 May 2025, the Education and Children's Services Committee authorised an option appraisal and pre-engagement stages of a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 regarding the future of Kinneff School.
- 3.9 The residents of Kinneff School catchment area, parents/carers of Catterline School, Councillors and Community Councils were informed there had been no responses to the interest in attending Kinneff School therefore Kinneff School remained mothballed for the school session 2025/26.
- 3.10 All stakeholders were invited to a drop-in meeting on 3 June 2025 at Kinneff and Catterline Village Hall. There were very few parents/carers of primary aged children who attended the meeting and the main focus of the discussions from attendees were regarding the alternative use of the school building.
- 3.11 An online option appraisal survey was launched and all stakeholders were invited to give their views on the future of the school and suggest any alternative to permanent closure. More details can be seen at section 4.
- 3.12 During the period of mothballing, there was only one family who noted interest in attending Kinneff School however this would not be sufficient to make the school viable.
- 3.13 According to NHS data, there are five pupils residing within the catchment area of Kinneff School which could enrol at the school in the next four academic sessions. Such a small roll does not support effective learning and successful implementation of Curriculum of Excellence. Therefore, there is no reasonable

prospect that the number of pupils in the area will increase such that the school should be re-opened in the future.

- 3.14 The Parents' Charter of 1981 gives parents the right to make a placing request for a school of their choice. Historically, Kinneff families have actively exercised their right to submit placing requests, with 13 applications from pupils residing within the Kinneff School catchment area requesting to enrol in alternative schools between August 2021 to July 2024. Therefore, it is unlikely that all in-zone families would choose to enrol their children at the school, were it to re-open.
- 3.15 During 2023/24 session, at its peak there were 11 pupils on roll at Kinneff School. With the capacity of 50, the occupancy level was 22%. From August 2024, if the school had remained operational with a roll of eight pupils, the utilisation would have been reduced to 16% capacity. Such a low occupancy level does not support the education or wellbeing of all learners and does not meet their varying needs. In addition, low occupancy is unsustainable, unaffordable and does not offer the best value.
- 3.16 On 9 October 2025, the Education & Children's Services Committee were presented the option appraisal outcome report and authorised the launch of the statutory consultation for the permanent closure of Kinneff School.
- 3.17 The option appraisal report was uploaded onto the EngageHQ page and Councillors, Community Council's and parents/carers of Catterline and Bervie School were sent letters with the link to the report and informed of the authorisation to process to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The report is appended to this report at Appendix A.

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

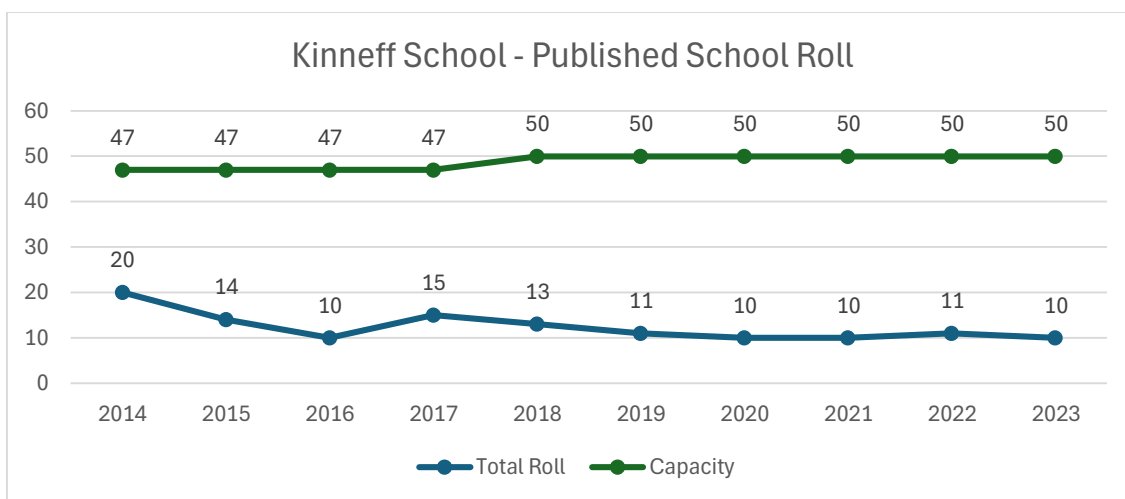
- 4.1 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternative to closure. The potential alternatives to closure would be:
- To re-open Kinneff School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or
  - To re-open Kinneff School, relocate pupils from Catterline School and close Catterline School
  - To continue with the current mothballing arrangement
- 4.2 The Kinneff community have been given the opportunity to present alternatives to closure and to present their views for the authority to consider. The main focus of the attendees at the drop in meeting was other uses of the building, therefore an online survey was created and distributed to gather more suggestions. The letter stated the survey would be open until 11 July 2025.
- 4.3 The outcome of the survey concluded with the majority of the suggestions echoing the meeting discussions on utilising the building for replacement of the community/village hall. All alternative uses of the school building would require the official closure of the school in the first instance.

- 4.4 The option appraisal report appended to this proposal document gives the full details of the comments and suggestions from the survey and the assessment of these. A summary can be seen below (similar comments have been grouped together with number of participants suggesting these):
- Permitting housing developments to increase pupil numbers (1)
  - Rezone the Kinneff catchment area to Catterline with bus travel (1)
  - Mothball until there is uptake again (1)
  - Out of school care(1)
  - ASN support hub / Community space (2)
  - Close Catterline Primary and relocate to Kinneff School (1)
  - Transfer the building to the community to be used as village hall (8)
  - Multi-purpose building; shop, post office, library, after school care, nursery, community garden, club, sports hall, Community pub, youth activity spaces (4)
- 4.5 Some of the suggestions were education based, whilst the majority would involve commitment from the community, other agencies or private companies. Suggestions for other uses of the building cannot be trialled without the formal closure of the school.
- 4.6 The option of reopening of the school is not viable at this time. This requires a number of families to enrol their children at the school.
- 4.7 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required of 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 details of the Council consideration of the alternatives are set out throughout the proposal document and the option appraisal assessment.

## **5. Kinneff School**

- 5.1 The pupil roll at Kinneff School had been monitored by Learning Estates Officers for a number of years. Chart 1 below shows the published School roll for Kinneff School from the decade prior to mothballing. The School had an increase in capacity from 47 to 50 due to the Aberdeenshire's Primary School Capacity Review 2017 which was approved at the Education & Children's Services Committee on [12 October 2017](#). Since 2014 the roll of Kinneff School has been operating under 43% capacity.

Chart 1 – Kinneff School Published School Roll prior to mothballing

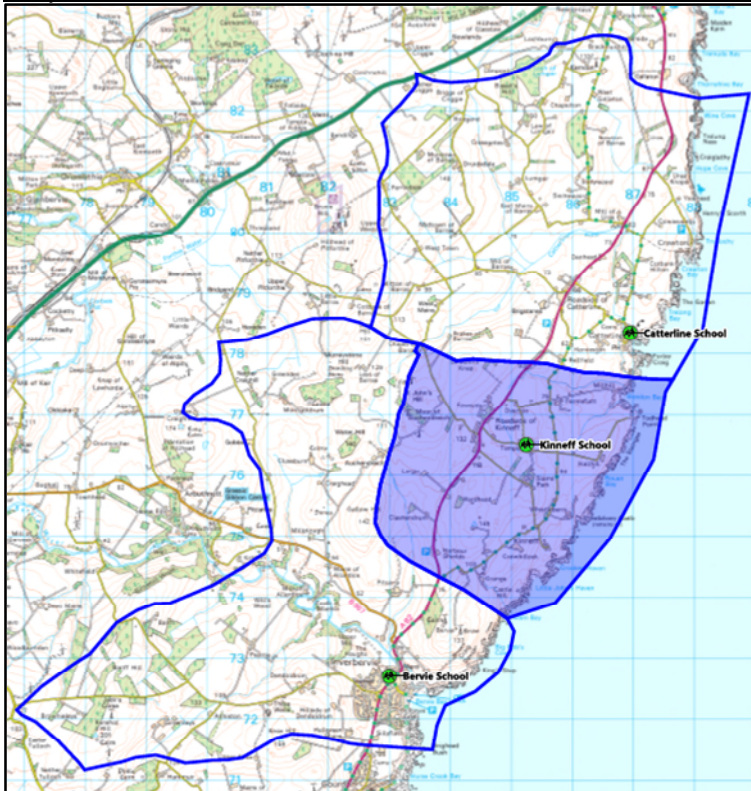


- 5.2 In May 2022, Kinneff School had a roll of 11 pupils which was reducing to eight pupils by the new session of August 2022. The decision was made to engage with the parents/carers of Kinneff School regarding a merger with Catterline School. Officers met with parents at both Kinneff and Catterline Schools, however an increase in roll due to additional in zone enrolments resulted in further engagement being paused. Parents were advised that should the roll fall again then discussions around the future viability of the school would resume.
- 5.3 The Education and Children’s Services Committee on [7 October 2021](#) approved the criteria and parameters for mothballing a school. On [10 October 2024](#) Aberdeenshire’s guidance for mothballing a primary school was approved at Education and Children’s Services Committee. The Director of Education & Children’s Services, in consultation with the Leadership Team, makes this decision when a school’s roll falls to eight or fewer pupils. If data indicates that the school is unlikely to become viable in the medium term, a statutory consultation should commence to begin the process of closure or merger. In this case, mothballing serves as an interim measure to safeguard the pupils’ educational benefits and social wellbeing.
- 5.4 In February 2024, the Director of Education & Children’s Services made the decision to temporarily mothball Kinneff School from August 2024 due to the roll dropping to eight pupils by the next session and the Live School Roll Forecast showed no anticipated increase in the roll of the school over the next five years.
- 5.5 Parents/Carers and staff of Kinneff School were informed of the intention to mothball Kinneff School on 27 March 2024. Pupils were offered a place at either Catterline or Bervie Schools with transport provided. The Head Teacher supported the families and staff through the mothballing process and pupils were successfully accommodated in the schools of their choice. All Kinneff zoned pupils chose to attend Catterline School and families were assured that younger siblings would also be guaranteed a place at that school if mothballing continued. Alternative arrangements for staff were also identified in line with their contracts.

## Current Details

- 5.6 The Stonehaven Cluster consists of 10 primary schools, Arduthie, Bervie, Catterline, Dunnottar, Glenbervie, Gourdon, Johnshaven, Kinneff, Lairhillock, and Mill O'Forest. Each of these are within the catchment area for Mackie Academy.
- 5.7 Kinneff School is located rurally at DD10 0SZ which is approximately half a mile away from the Roadside of Kinneff settlement. The original school building which now comprises the hall was built in 1900 and the main school building was added in 1957. The privately owned schoolhouse is attached to the original school building. The catchment area serves the Roadside of Kinneff and the surrounding rural area. Kinneff School is 7.6 miles from Stonehaven (as per Google Maps).
- 5.8 Kinneff School catchment is bordered by Catterline School to the north and Bervie School to the south and west. Map 1 below shows the catchment area of Kinneff School and surrounding schools.

Map 1 – Catchment area for Kinneff School and surrounding schools



- 5.9 Kinneff School has a capacity of 50 pupils and when operational delivered education across two buildings. One building contains two classrooms, offices and toilets and the other is a general purpose hall and toilets. The outdoor spaces include a playground and a large grass area with wooden play equipment.
- 5.10 Kinneff School has a servery kitchen and lunches were provided by Bervie School.

5.11 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%)

Condition is an assessment of the physical condition of the school building and its grounds. Kinneff School was assessed in December 2021 and the overall condition rating for the property is 'B (67.80%)'.

The condition survey considered maintenance required to maintain service delivery for the next five years and the total investment required is £243,329 equating to £63.53/m<sup>2</sup>. The majority of this cost is related to a required full electrical rewire.

Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, the buildings, the grounds and the impact they have on teaching and learning, leisure and social activities, as well as the health and wellbeing of users. The Suitability assessment of Kinneff School was carried out in February 2022 and the school was graded as 'A (91.14%)'.

The external facilities which include drop-off/pick up areas, the car park, circulation, bike storage and external storage were overall graded 'C – Poor', showing major problems and not operating optimally.

5.12 Kinneff School offered education to children from P1 to P7, and pupils were taught in a multi-composite setting. There is no early learning childcare (ELC) setting on site and local children often attended ELC at nearby schools, private nurseries, childminders or playgroups.

5.13 When the school was last in operation, it was managed with a dual head teacher for both Kinneff School and Catterline School and the staffing allocation with Full Time Equivalent (FTE) are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

<b>Staffing Position</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Dual Head Teacher	1
Teacher	1
Pupil Support Assistant	0.39
Administrator	0.37
Admin Support Assistant	0.30
Janitor	0.80
Cleaner	0.29

5.14 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.

- 5.15 In addition, ASN teaching and pupil support staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the Stonehaven Cluster.
- 5.16 The School did not operate before or after school care. There were some comments from the option appraisal survey which suggested before and after school clubs at the school however there is no statutory entitlement of this within Aberdeenshire.
- 5.17 The live school roll forecast shown in Table 2 below shows the anticipated forecast prior to the mothballing of Kinneff School in August 2024. It shows a decrease of pupils at Kinneff School within the next five years.

Table 2

Year	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
<b>Total Roll</b>	8	8	6	7	6
<b>%Roll/Cap</b>	16%	16%	12%	13%	11%

- 5.18 There is one site for housing development within the Kinneff School catchment area. The site is for 46 units and has been constrained for a number of years. There is no indication that this development will progress in the short term future.
- 5.19 There is no current HMIE Inspection report available for Kinneff School.

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

- 6.1 The Council proposes that Kinneff School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be implemented at the conclusion of the full consultation process. The Council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils living within the Kinneff 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 all options considered are set out in Section 7, Section 8 and Section 9.

### Viable options

- **Option 1** – Close Kinneff School and merge with Bervie School
- **Option 2** – Close Kinneff School and merge with Catterline School

### Alternative to closure and discounted options

- **Option 3** – Close Kinneff School and merge with Glenbervie School
- **Option 4** – Close Kinneff School and split the catchment between Bervie and Catterline Schools
- **Alternative Option 1** – Re-open Kinneff School with the current catchment area

- **Alternative Option 2** – Re-open Kinneff School with an extended catchment area
- **Alternative Option 3** – Re-open Kinneff School, Close Catterline School and relocate pupils from Catterline School
- **Alternative Option 4** – Continuation of mothballing of Kinneff School

6.3 Alternative uses for the building will be further explored with the community during the consultation period and beyond. There has been continued interest in the building as a replacement for the Kinneff and Catterline Village Hall throughout the option appraisal process. Council 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 The options identified above would have minimal impact on the school rolls of Catterline School and Bervie School. Table 3 below details the suitability and condition ratings, census roll and capacity of each school affected by this proposal and the forecasted roll for the next four years based on live data which includes updated rolls, planned housing developments and NHS data.

6.6 Combining the expected pupils in the next four years who reside within the Kinneff School catchment area with Catterline School, at the highest predicted pupil roll Catterline School could be at 64% of its capacity over the next four years. At the highest predicted pupil roll of Bervie School could be at 56% of its capacity in the next four years.

The 2024 based published school roll forecasts can be viewed at:  
<https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/admissions/school-roll-forecasts/>

Table 3 – Live School Roll Forecast

	Condition Grading	Suitability Grading	Capacity	Census Roll (18/09/2025)	2026	2027	2028	2029
Kinneff School	B	A	50	0	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Bervie School	B	A	342	207	191	184	165	155
Catterline School	B	B	73	48	44	44	30	28

\* Due to GDPR this data has been suppressed to prevent the possible identification of an individual

## 7. Option Assessment

7.1 Officers applied an approved methodology to assess the identified options. The process included a detailed analysis of options through Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). The SWOT analysis definitions used is attached as Appendix B.

7.2 Together with each school’s baseline score and outcome of the option appraisal SWOT matrix, the other aspects that were considered to formulate the overall recommendations are:

- Early Years
- Transport
- Road Network
- Outcome of engagement carried out with Kinneff School community and Catterline School parents/carers, staff and pupils
- Environmental impact
- Learning Estate sustainability

7.3 Table 4 below shows the highest top two ranking options.

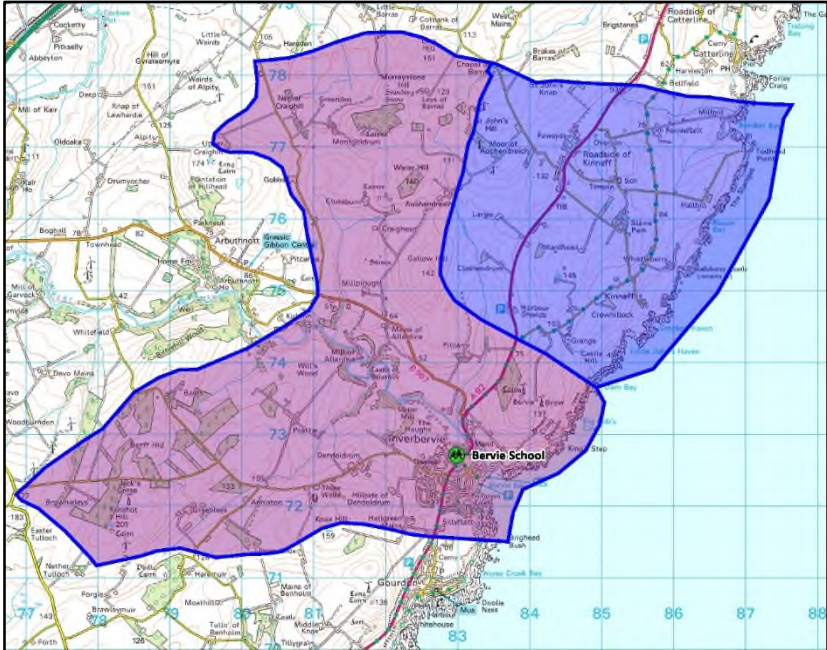
Table 4 – Outcome of Option Appraisal

Option
<b>Option 1</b> - Close Kinneff School and merge with Bervie School
<b>Option 2</b> - Close Kinneff School and merge with Catterline School

**7.4 Option 1 – Close Kinneff School and merge with Bervie School**

7.5 The proposed catchment area for this option is show in Map 2 below. The Bervie School catchment area highlighted in purple would be extended to cover the Kinneff School catchment area highlighted in blue and the blue external outline would be the new catchment area for Bervie School.

Map 2 – Kinneff School catchment area merged with Bervie School



7.6 Bervie School is located within Inverbervie, DD10 0RU. The school was built in 1937 and had various extensions since, including the most recent dedicated early years provision space and an additional classroom in 2018. The catchment area

covers the town of Inverbervie and surrounding rural areas. Bervie School is 3.5 miles/ 7 minutes away from Kinneff School (as per google maps).

- 7.7 During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Kinneff School catchment area.
- 7.8 Bervie School offers primary education from P1 to P7. It is fully accessible and has early years provision. Bervie School is within one building and has linked temporary accommodation. It consists of a number of classrooms, GP rooms, games hall, large dining hall, community lounge, staff room, offices and a range of toilets. The outdoor facilities include large flat grass playground with wooden trim trail and concrete areas with tyre planters and toadstool seating.
- 7.9 The school has a production kitchen and provides meals to Catterline School and previously provided meals to Kinneff School when it was last in operation. Bervie School has a third party who provides wrap around care.
- 7.10 Bervie School is graded as an A (92.63%) for suitability (good – performing well and operating efficiently) and a B (76.3%) for condition (satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration).
- 7.11 Bervie School has the capacity of 342 pupils and a pupil roll of 207 (as of 15 December 2025) These are distributed across eight classes. The 2024 based School Roll forecasts suggests a falling roll from 190 pupils in 2026 (55% capacity) to 154 pupils in 2029 (45% capacity).
- 7.12 The class structure for Bervie School for the 2025/26 session is shown in Table 5 below

Table 5 - Bervie School Class Structure

Class Stage	Class numbers
P1	24
P2	23
P3/4	24
P4	27
P5	32
P5/6	24
P6/7	23
P7	30

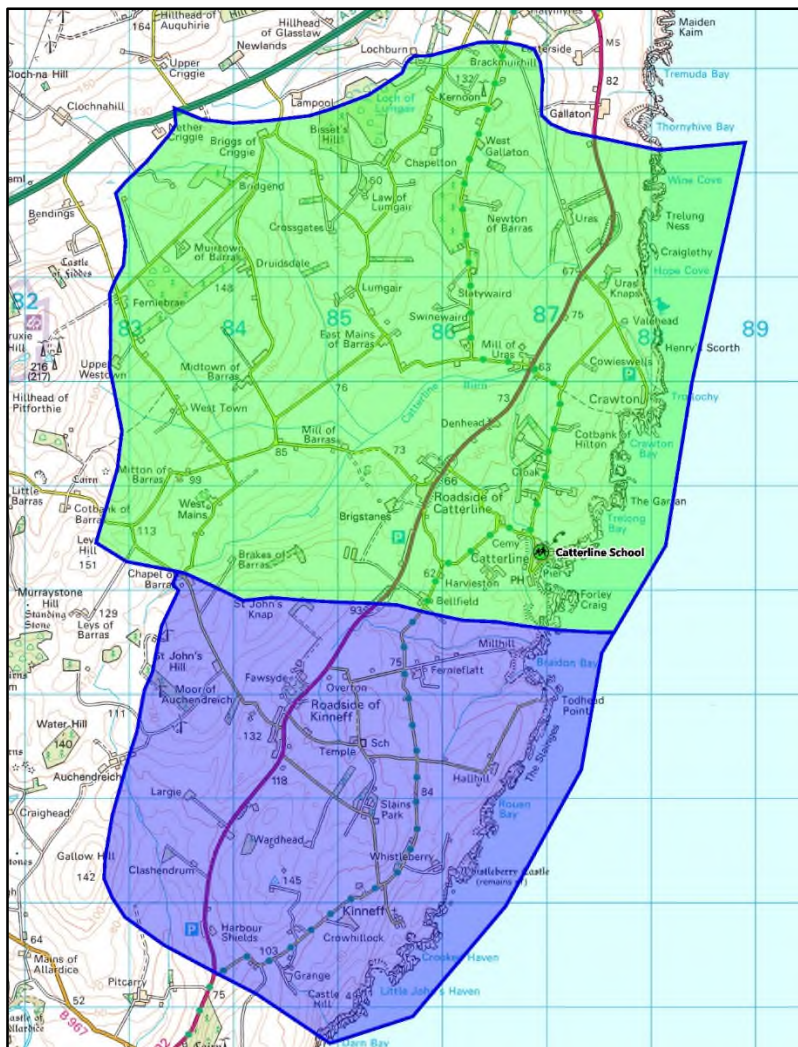
- 7.13 There is a housing development within Bervie Schol catchment area for 200 houses however it is categorised as deliverable with constraints.
- 7.14 The closure of Kinneff School and merger with Bervie School scored the highest on the option appraisal ranking due to the full accessibility, early years provision on-site, breakfast and afterschool club and access to more enhanced spaces. It is recognised however, that this is a larger town school with a higher roll which is a change from the small rural school of Kinneff. This change of profile from a

small rural school to a large school was not the wishes of the parents/carers at the time of mothballing.

7.15 **Option 2 – Close Kinneff School and merge with Catterline School**

7.16 The proposed catchment area for this option is show in Map 3 below. The Catterline School catchment area highlighted in green would be extended to cover the Kinneff School catchment area highlighted in blue and the blue external outline would be the new catchment area for Catterline School.

**Map 3 – Kinneff School catchment area merged with Catterline School**



7.17 Catterline School is located within Catterline, Stonehaven, AB39 2UL. The school was built in 1957 with an extension in 1970. The catchment area covers the village of Catterline and surrounding rural areas. Catterline School is 3.1 miles/ 7 minutes away from Kinneff School (as per google maps).

7.18 During the period of mothballing the school has been nominated as one of the designated schools for pupils moving into the Kinneff School catchment area.

- 7.19 Catterline School offers primary education from P1 to P7. Catterline School is within one building and consists of three classrooms, (one of which is within linked accommodation), a general purpose hall, small breakout space, staffroom, offices and toilets. The outdoor facilities include a concrete and grass playground with various wooden play equipment, wooden hut, shelter sheds and sporting equipment. It also has raised planters which are used for outdoor play and outdoor learning.
- 7.20 In 2022, works took place within Catterline school to remove a second linked accommodation and within the main building additional storage and learning spaces were created as well as internal decoration and toilet refurbishments.
- 7.21 The School has a servery kitchen and lunches are provided by Bervie School. There is no early years provision (ELC) on site and local children often attend ELC at nearby schools, private nurseries, childminders or playgroups. Catterline School does not hold any before or after school clubs.
- 7.22 Catterline School is graded as a B (81.05%) for suitability and a B (65.1%) for condition (satisfactory – performing adequately but showing minor deterioration). The condition assessments took place before the removal of the second temporary accommodation and internal works.
- 7.23 Catterline School has the capacity of 73 pupils and a pupil roll of 48 (as of 15 December 2025). These are distributed within two classes. The 2024 based School Roll Forecasts suggests a falling roll from 45 pupils in 2026 (61% capacity) to 29 pupils in 2029 (40% capacity).
- 7.24 The class structure for Catterline School for the 2025/26 session is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6 - Catterline School Class Structure

Class Stage	Class numbers
P1-5	24
P5-7	24

- 7.25 There is a housing development within the Catterline School catchment area for five houses which is currently under construction.
- 7.26 During the current session 2025/26 school transport was provided to eight pupils from Kinneff School catchment area to Catterline School at a cost of £100.29 per day. More information on school transport can be found at Section 12.
- 7.27 All in zone pupils enrolled in Kinneff School at the time of mothballing chose to attend Catterline School. Therefore, the permanent closure of Kinneff school is not expected to have adverse effects for Catterline School.
- 7.28 Kinneff and Catterline School worked together for sporting activities prior to Kinneff School being mothballed. Catterline and Kinneff School had a Football Club called “Catkins” which shows previous collaboration between the schools.

7.29 The closure of Kinneff School and merger with Catterline School scored the second highest in the option appraisal ranking due to the ease of transition for pupils and increase of outdoor learning and play space. Importantly, the schools are also similar sized and are already familiar in regard to having a shared dual Head Teacher with a regular collaboration between both schools.

## **8. Discounted Options**

8.1 Details of the Council's consideration of the discounted options is set out below:

### **8.2 Option 3 – Close Kinneff School and merge with Glenbervie School.**

8.3 Glenbervie School is northwest of the Kinneff School catchment area, at the opposite side of the A90 however the catchment areas do not align. This means that pupils would have to travel through a different catchment area to get to Glenbervie School, crossing a dual carriageway. Glenbervie School is 6.3 miles/13 minutes from Kinneff School (as per google maps). Therefore, this option was discounted.

### **8.4 Option 4 – Close Kinneff School and split the catchment between Catterline and Bervie Schools.**

8.5 Kinneff School catchment area covers the Roadside of Kinneff and surrounding rural areas. Due to the topology of the Kinneff School catchment and as there is only one settlement there is no practical way to split the catchment between Bervie and Catterline Schools. If the catchment was split this would be an increase of school transport contracts going from similar areas to two different schools rather than one, increasing transport costs and vehicle CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. This would also have a negative impact on the community by splitting up families within a small rural area. Therefore, this option was discounted.

## **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 and option appraisal process, officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure. The online survey allowed participants to present alternatives to the closure with a deadline of 11 July 2025. The full analysis of the survey can be found as part of to the Option Appraisal Report at Appendix A.

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

### **9.4 Alternative Option 1 – Re-open Kinneff School with the current catchment area**

9.5 As shown in the chart in section 5.1, Kinneff School has had a decreasing roll for a decade prior to mothballing with the previous five years fluctuating between 10 and 11 pupils in one class.

- 9.6 As of 9 May 2024 (SEEMIS extract), there were 27 primary pupils in zone for Kinneff School however only 10 were attending Kinneff School.
- 9.7 As of 22 October 2025 (SEEMIS extract), there were 19 children of P1 to P7 age residing within the Kinneff School catchment area. The vast majority of these pupils attend Catterline School either through parental choice by placing request before the school was mothballed, at the time Kinneff School was mothballed or new pupil enrolments.
- 9.8 As stated previously in section 3, the school was mothballed in August 2024 when the roll was due to fall to eight pupils and the school has not been operational since.
- 9.9 Aberdeenshire Council sought enrolments to the school for the 2025/26 session. The registration period for primary 1 admissions are held annually in early January for the following school session in August of that year. It was published on the Aberdeenshire Council social media at the start of the admission period that families residing within the catchment area of Kinneff School are entitled to enrol. The Kinneff School website was updated to inform interested families of the registration period and that enrolments will be accepted and the school may reopen if there is sufficient interest. The former Head Teacher/current Head Teacher of Catterline School was also informed that enrolments can be submitted for Kinneff School. At the time, no families indicated they wished to enrol in Kinneff School.
- 9.10 In May 2025, one former family declared interest in attending Kinneff School however less than eight pupils is not a sufficient number in order to make the school viable or ensure educational benefits and wellbeing for those pupils.
- 9.11 Five children within the catchment area could enrol for P1 between August 2026 and August 2029 according to NHS data. If the school were to be reopened and all former pupils at the time of mothballing re-enrolled and the known pupils within the catchment under school age enrolled, the projected school roll would only exceed eight pupils for one year.
- 9.12 There are no masterplans agreed within the Kinneff School catchment area, however there is one housing development in the Local Development Plan (LDP) for 46 houses. The development is located within the Roadside of Kinneff and has been in the LDP for a number of years and is categorised as deliverable with constraints. Therefore, there is little prospect of generating enough pupils in the area to make the school roll viable and allow the school to be reinstated.
- 9.13 Aberdeenshire Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching making the reopening of Kinneff School unviable.
- 9.14 **Alternative Option 2 – Re-open Kinneff School with an extended catchment area**

- 9.15 There is a documented trend in Aberdeenshire of declining primary school rolls, especially in rural areas, which is having a significant impact on school utilisation and long-term viability.
- 9.16 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. Rezoning a catchment area can take many years to show impact on a school due to Aberdeenshire Council allowing pupils to remain in their current school.
- 9.17 Consideration has been given to extending the Kinneff School catchment area. As shown in Map 1 in Section 5, the catchment area of the school borders with Catterline School to the north and Bervie School to the south, both of which are within the catchment area of Mackie Academy within the Stonehaven cluster of schools.
- 9.18 Extending the catchment area north to incorporate part of the Catterline catchment area would have a negative impact on the sustainability of Catterline School. The 2024 based School Roll Forecasts for Catterline School indicates a falling roll from 45 pupils in 2026 (61% capacity) to 29 pupils in 2029 (40% capacity).
- 9.19 Extending the catchment area south to incorporate part of the Bervie catchment area would have a negative impact on the sustainability of Bervie School. The 2024 based School Roll Forecasts for Bervie School indicates a falling roll from 190 pupils in 2026 (55% capacity) to 154 pupils in 2029 (45% capacity).
- 9.20 Therefore, rezoning any part of Catterline or Bervie Schools catchment areas to Kinneff School would accelerate the falling roll and impact the sustainability of these schools.
- 9.21 **Alternative Option 3 – Re-open Kinneff School, Close Catterline School and relocate pupils from Catterline School**
- 9.22 It was suggested from a participant of the option appraisal survey to relocate the pupils at Catterline School to Kinneff School and close Catterline School.
- 9.23 The capacity of Kinneff School is 50 pupils, the current roll of Catterline School is 48 (as of 15 December 2025). If these pupils were to be educated within Kinneff School building for this session (2025/26), the school would be within 96% capacity and would only allow the school to have two spaces which would be reserved places for children likely to move into the Catterline or Kinneff School catchment area.
- 9.24 Catterline School has the published capacity of 73 pupils. In comparison with Kinneff School, Catterline School has a third classroom and a breakout area which enhances children’s educational experience with extra space to do activities or have a quiet space for pupils who require that additional support. Should the roll increase above 50 pupils, then there would be a fewer number of stages per composite class.

- 9.25 As of 22 October 2025, there are 19 P1-7 pupils within the Kinneff School catchment area and there are 37 P1-7 pupils within the Catterline School catchment area. Relocating more children from one catchment area to another would have a negative impact environmentally as there would be more pupils travelling from further afield than locally, increasing CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and transport costs.
- 9.26 Re-opening Kinneff School and relocating pupils from Catterline School to Kinneff School and closing Catterline School would have a negative impact upon pupils and not be sustainable or practical. The Council would deem this option as unviable.
- 9.27 **Alternative Option 3 – Continuation of mothballing of Kinneff School**
- 9.28 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 Kinneff community. Mothballing would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school.
- 9.29 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.
- 9.30 It is stated within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 - Statutory Guidance document; *Mothballing is only appropriate for a temporary period and should be subject to regular review, at least annually, against the same requirements which led to the original decision to mothball the school (or stage of education). The maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote. The condition of the school building and cost of maintaining the mothballed provision will also be relevant.*
- 9.31 The school building is subject to regular checks by the janitorial team however the longer the school is mothballed there is an increased likelihood of mechanical failure of the heating system. Unoccupied buildings deteriorate more quickly than operational premises and are more likely to be exposed to potential crimes and acts of vandalism. The Council is responsible for the costs of maintaining a mothballed building and its grounds.
- 9.32 During the Option Appraisal process there was a strong community interest in an asset transfer of the Kinneff School building as a replacement for the Kinneff & Catterline Village Hall. This can only be achieved if the school is permanently closed. Continuation of mothballing would not support the wishes of the community for this reason.
- 9.33 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing. New pupils either reaching school age or moving into the catchment, who attend the designated schools, would be entitled to school transport. Those pupils who chose out of zone placements to other schools whilst Kinneff School was still in operation are not entitled to school transport.

9.34 The Council do not consider the continuation of mothballing Kinneff School beyond the period of the closure consultation to be a viable option.

## 10. Educational Benefit Statement

10.1 In September 2019, Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting, People, Places and Learning' was launched. In November 2025, the strategy was refreshed and updated to reflect national drivers for change. Local authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate namely;

1. **Education** – Support and facilitate excellent learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
2. **Skills** – Provide inspiring spaces to develop skills required for learners to positively contribute to communities.
3. **Wellbeing** – Provide suitable indoor and outdoor learning environments to meet the needs and wellbeing of all users.
4. **Digital** – Digitally enable learning environments to support the delivery of Scottish Government's digital learning and teaching strategy.
5. **Engagement** – Engage with the community to understand their local needs, including under-represented voices.
6. **Place** – Provide the right facilities in the right place to ensure public services are inclusive, sustainable and effective in improving people's outcomes.
7. **Data informed decisions** – Inform good decisions through the use of clear and cohesive data.
8. **Public Resources** – Ensure best use of public resources to meet current and future needs.
9. **Condition** – Manage and maintain environments in a good condition.
10. **Sustainability** – Achieve low energy consumption, low carbon and low emissions.

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 Kinneff 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. Both Bervie and Catterline Schools 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 1130 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 The educational benefits are considered below for pupils if either of the options mentioned in Section 7 are adopted.
- 10.19 Kinneff School did not provide any before or after school care when it was in operation. Bervie School provides wrap around care as “Bervie Kids Club” which is run by a third partner provider. Catterline School does not have before or after school care however the pupils are offered a wide range of activities through Active Schools for during and outwith school time, including holiday periods which the majority of Catterline School pupils chose to attend.
- 10.20 Both Bervie and Catterline School have links with the community and older residents through intergenerational activities. Bervie have links with Hanover Court sheltered housing, Castle Lodge residential home (elderly care), the local church, businesses and community groups. Catterline have links with the local community, senior citizens and Edenvie Care Home residents who are invited to events hosted by the school. The school have also worked alongside Milltown, (a local centre for vulnerable adults) and have strong links with Catterline community Church and Bervie Church with their respective ministers supporting education at the school. This collaboration provides valuable learning experiences and enhances community bonds.
- 10.21 Outdoor learning enhances children’s learning experience and both Bervie and Catterline Schools have outdoor spaces which are used regularly. Bervie School

use their playground orchard area and raised flowerbeds and get support from the community to use the nearby beach. Catterline School use their playground benches, wildlife garden, log cabin and bike shed that encompass sand and water trays and role play equipment. The playing field next to Catterline school and Catterline Bay are also used by pupils at the school.

- 10.22 Pupils of Bervie and Catterline Schools have the opportunity to participate in various activities and events across the year such as annual Christmas shows. Bervie School host various events such as the P7 show, sports day, P7 Burns Supper, Scottish Week celebrations, charity events, residential trip, whole school walk and parents versus pupils' football and netball matches. Catterline School host an annual Christmas Fayre, Poppy Scotland Appeal, Pantomime at the Arts Centre or Cinema, Each class has an annual trip depending on their current topic/theme, previous trips include Drum Castle, St Cyrus Beach, House of Dunn, Aberdeen Science Centre, His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Montrose Airfield and Museum and Gordon Highlanders' Museum. There are also a number of events which take place biennially such as Macmillan Coffee Morning, Blythswood Shoeboxes and a residential trip for P6 and P7 pupils at Dalguise, Perthshire. Catterline pupils can also take part in the Scots Poetry Competition, annual art competition and most recently took part in a Christmas Cracker Joke of the Year competition.
- 10.23 A cooperative learning strategy normally involves four pupils of roughly the same age group working together collaboratively. If Kinneff 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. Pupils of Bervie School can participate in pupil groups such as Can-Do Council, Library Group, P7 Buddies and Bus Stop Helpers. Pupils of Catterline School can participate in pupil groups such as Playground Leaders, P1 and P7 Buddies, Right Respecting School, Pupil Focus Group, Playground Charter and Football Charter. Catterline School is also part of the Eco Schools which children are involved in.
- 10.24 A larger school roll offers children from the Kinneff 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. Both schools offer a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that support physical development and personal interests. Bervie pupils have access to lunch clubs which change regularly including hockey, basketball, golf, rounders, board games, running club, fitness and crochet. Catterline School has a variety of sporting activities which all pupils can enjoy such as once a week lunchtime running club, football club "Catkins" which is run by former pupils and parents. Active Schools also offers both schools sporting sessions such as P5-7 netball at Bervie School and touch rugby, street dance, cycling workshops, basketball, netball and badminton at Catterline School.

- 10.25 Some Aberdeenshire Schools work together to collaborate for activities and learning. Bervie School link with Johnshaven School for P7 residential trips. Catterline School participate in the Lathallan Highland Games with other local schools as well as P7 rotary quiz alongside cluster primary schools and P6 participate in the euro quiz alongside children across Aberdeenshire.
- 10.26 Bervie and Catterline School both have active parent council's which meet termly to support the schools in school improvement such as seeking funding for school resources or trips and encouraging parental and community engagement. If Kinneff School were to reopen there would be opportunity for a parent council to operate however, with a small pupil cohort, there would be a small number of families to participate, resulting in a greater reliance on individuals to support the school.
- 10.27 Although Bervie School is not an enhanced provision school, the school does have a number of additional spaces for pupils who require some extra support such as a community lounge and additional support for learning (ASL) classroom. Bervie also has some quiet spaces for pupils such as, a sensory room, and use of a quiet area in the ASL classroom and the library when available. Catterline School have a range of quiet spaces for pupils and the pupils have a say in the space which best helps them relax and de-escalate. Catterline School also has access to Cluster resources such as Outreach Enhance Provision, Nurture Nature Practitioner and Pupil Wellbeing Workers.
- 10.28 As all in zone Kinneff School pupils chose to attend Catterline School at the point in mothballing, Catterline pupils were asked to complete a survey on their views and experience of their school at the end of the first term Kinneff School was mothballed. Pupils gave feedback on things they liked or disliked about Catterline school, what it was like having more pupils in the school and what their experience was since Kinneff pupils joined Catterline School. There was positive feedback from Catterline and former Kinneff pupils commenting on the friendly, kind, fair and hardworking teachers and children, opportunities to be buddies and play more games as well as more friends to play with and transition to academy.

## **11. Effect on the local community**

- 11.1 Aberdeenshire Council recognise that the uncertainty surrounding the future of the school has impacted the community and it is hoped that this statutory consultation to permanently close Kinneff School will give clarity to the community and a sense of certainty regarding their children's education.
- 11.2 Kinneff is a roadside hamlet and residents travel to Inverbervie or Stonehaven to access services, such as GP, dental surgeries, library, sport facilities, shops and other community facilities. Roadside of Kinneff have several bus stops and a regular bus route between Montrose and Stonehaven.
- 11.3 While in operation, the school did not operate a breakfast or after school club. In the year prior to mothballing the school building was used once a week for a period of 6 months for a community group.

- 11.4 Bervie and Catterline Schools are used regularly for hires. Bervie School is used over the summer break by the church holiday club and the after school care “Bervie Kids Club”, Friends of Bervie School and Bervie Gala. Catterline School hall is used by the community council once a month and Catterline School Parent Group (CSPG).
- 11.5 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 (SIMD) is a measure of deprivation across 6,976 data zones. SIMD ranks data zones from most deprived (ranked as 1) to least deprived (ranked as 6,976) and the Mearns North and Inverbervie data zone is ranked at 4,982. This indicates that pupils living within the Kinneff School catchment are not considered living in socio-economical deprived households.
- 11.6 During the pre-consultation and option appraisal process with stakeholders there was a consistent interest from community members of using the Kinneff School building as a replacement for the village hall.
- 11.7 During the drop-in meeting on 3 June 2025, the majority of attendees were community members interested in the Kinneff School building and this was also shown through the option appraisal survey with eight similar comments on using the building as the village hall. The members of the community discussed with Officers that this was due to the upkeep of their current hall building.
- 11.8 Kinneff and Catterline Village Hall is located in Roadside of Kinneff, 0.6 miles from Kinneff School and is used frequently by the community. It is available for bookings such as exercise classes, children’s parties and is also a polling station in the area.
- 11.9 There were many other suggestions from stakeholders through the option appraisal survey regarding the uses of the building which can be found in Section 4.4.
- 11.10 A Place and Wellbeing assessment was carried out to consider the impacts of the mothballing and proposed closure of Kinneff School on health and wellbeing of the local community. Through a series of meetings and a collaborative workshop involving community members and key stakeholders a range of views and recommendations were gathered.
- 11.11 The full Place and Wellbeing Assessment has been published on the Aberdeenshire Engage portal here: <https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/kinneff-school> and is attached as Appendix C to this report. The findings and recommendations will be shared with relevant services and teams within Aberdeenshire Council, as well as external partners and community groups who play a role in shaping the future of education provision in Kinneff. These recommendations should be reviewed to identify which actions can be incorporated into future plans, acknowledging that some may require further exploration and collaboration. The assessment process reflects the Council’s commitment to supporting positive opportunities and addressing any unintended negative consequences for the community.

11.12 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 and Aberdeenshire Council is open to work with the local community to explore this. 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.

11.13 The evidence presented above suggests that closing Kinneff School would have minimal impact on the community's existing arrangements and overall sustainability.

## **12. School Transport**

12.1 During the session 2023/24 before Kinneff school was mothballed, there was one school transport contract for Kinneff School for 6 pupils at the cost of £64.28 per day.

12.2 As all in zone pupils chose to enrol in Catterline School, weekly transition visits took place in May and June 2024 to familiarise the Kinneff pupils with the pupils and staff of Catterline School. There was positive feedback from pupils and staff members of how this process helped the transition.

12.3 Following the mothballing of Kinneff School, there were a number of enquiries from families out of zone for Catterline requesting school transport. A school transport briefing was distributed to the Head Teacher of Catterline School to circulate to families. The briefing was to inform parents/carers that only the pupils enrolled at Kinneff School at the time of mothballing were entitled to school transport. The briefing also stated in all instances of mothballing, transport is not provided to pupils who have either never attended the school or moved prior to the date that the mothballing decision was made.

12.4 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.

12.5 There are currently eight pupils (SEEMIS extract 22 October 2025) who are being transported by Aberdeenshire Council to Catterline School either as enrolled pupils who were attending Kinneff School at the time of mothballing or newly enrolled pupils from August 2024.

12.6 There are currently 11 pupils (SEEMIS extract 22 October 2025) within the Kinneff School catchment area who are being transported to other schools by parents/carers or other means of transport.

12.7 The closure of Kinneff School would not impact the journey times for pupils as they are already being transported to other schools within the area. However, the additional travel time compared to travelling to/from Kinneff School to either Bervie or Catterline School is a maximum increase of 5 minutes one way in normal conditions, depending on pupils' home address.

- 12.8 As of October 2025, there are three transport contracts taking pupils to and from Catterline School at the total cost of £404.06 per day. One of these contracts is for an eight-seater vehicle transporting pupils residing within the Kinneff School catchment area at the cost of £100.29 per day.
- 12.9 As of October 2025, Bervie School has one school transport contract for 14 pupils at a cost of £203.90 per day.
- 12.10 In the event of closure, all pupils within the Kinneff School catchment area would be entitled to school transport should they choose to attend the reassigned school of either Bervie or Catterline School.

### 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. The cost of this would be based upon the location of the pupils requiring transport at that point in time.
- 13.2 Further details of the financial impact of this proposal are included in the financial template provided in Appendix D. The costs provided in the template are from the 2023/24 session when the school was last operational for a full session.

### 14. Sustainability

- 14.1 An average of three years carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions for all schools considered in this proposal document for are detailed in Table 7 below. The permanent closure of Kinneff School would result in a reduction of around 31 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually and would not increase the emissions at either Bervie or Catterline Schools.

Table 7

School	Average Annual CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions (tonnes) (2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24)	Impacted by permanent closure of Kinneff School
Kinneff School	31	Yes
Bervie School	122	No
Catterline School	34	No

- 14.2 Depending on the outcome of this proposal, all primary pupils residing within the current Kinneff School catchment area will be entitled to transport to either Catterline School or Bervie School. If there is any increase in emissions from transport this will be outweighed by the closure of Kinneff School as shown by the emissions detailed in table 7 above. There will also be a reduction in individual parental journeys as more children will be entitled to school transport. This will result in a net decrease in transport emissions.
- 14.3 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 Kinneff School is already mothballed, there will be no impact on staffing arrangements at either of the affected schools from the permanent closure of Kinneff School. All staff previously based at Kinneff School were redeployed at the time of mothballing. A continuation of mothballing would also not have an impact upon staffing.
- 15.2 The staffing allocation while Kinneff School was in operation are shown in Section 5 above and the financial template are shown in Appendix D.
- 15.3 The previous Head Teacher of Kinneff School was in a dual headship role for both Kinneff School and Catterline School. Table 8 below indicates the staffing entitlement (as of October 2025) and is shown as Full Time Equivalent (FTE). The column for Kinneff is based upon previous staffing allocation.

Table 8 – Staffing for each school

Staffing Position	Kinneff School (if reopened)	Bervie School	Catterline School
Head Teacher	1	1	1
Teacher	1	8	1
Management Time	0.7	0.3	0.7
Non Class Contact Time	0.22	0.89	0.22
Pupil Support Assistant	0.39	4	0.9
Administrator	0.37	0.74	0.4
Admin Support Assistant	0.3	0.46	0.33
Senior Catering Assistant	0.36	-	-
Catering Assistant	-	1.54	0.36
Unit Cook Supervisor	-	0.93	-
Janitor	0.8	0.72	0.1
Cleaner	0.29	1.38	0.43

- 15.4 As Bervie School has Early Years provision, there is also staffing entitlement associated with this.
- 15.5 Additional Support Needs (ASN) teaching and pupil support are allocated to each school in accordance with an annual assessment of needs across the cluster.
- 15.6 Janitorial provision is allocated to each school based on the Stonehaven Cluster allocation.
- 15.7 Trade Unions are included in the consultation process. Any impacts for staff will be addressed under existing HR & OD policies and procedures.

## **16. Equal Opportunities**

- 16.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a statutory requirement of the Council to assess the policies and practices in a structured way to ensure that adverse effects on groups with protected characteristics are avoided and meet the requirements of anti-discrimination and equalities legislation. 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 and the impact on the education service. An IIA has been carried out as part of the option appraisal process and a further assessment will be completed on conclusion of the final consultation report.
- 16.2 The IIA identifies the increase of journey time by around 5 minutes as an adverse effect for children within P1-P7. However, this is far less than the maximum time primary school pupils are expected to travel. As the school has been mothballed since August 2024, all current Kinneff pupils at the time of mothballing are already making their journey to Catterline Schools by school transport. Many other pupils residing in the Kinneff School catchment area have been making similar journeys to other local schools for many years prior to the mothballing through approved placing requests.
- 16.3 As stated in Section 12, the increased travel distances from the Kinneff School catchment to either Bervie or Catterline School depends on the pupils address however this is not lengthy in comparison with other pupils within Aberdeenshire.
- 16.4 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.
- 16.5 Under the Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat pupils with disabilities or additional support needs less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting any pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Existing arrangements in place for pupils with additional support needs will continue.

## **17. Consultation Arrangements**

- 17.1 At its meeting on 9 October 2025, Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee agreed 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 report until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a final report on the consultation and will reach a decision on the proposal.
- 17.2 A copy of this document will be issued to all of 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/> and <https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/kinneff-school>.

- 17.3 The period for consultation will run from 12 January 2026 until 6 March 2026, which adequately covers a period of 30 school days.
- 17.4 A public meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 6pm in Kinneff and Catterline Village Hall, Kinneff, Montrose, DD10 0TE. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting is welcome. The meeting will be convened by the Council and the Council will present the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments at the meeting. A minute will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.
- 17.5 Opportunities will be provided for the staff working at Bervie and Catterline School to discuss the proposals. Opportunities will also be arranged for all primary pupils within these schools to engage in the consultation in a manner which is appropriate to their age.
- 17.6 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:

[engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/kinneff-school](https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/kinneff-school)



- 17.7 The Council will also consider any written comments, which should be emailed to [LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk). Alternatively, comments can be sent to the Learning Estates Team, Unit 15, Harlaw Way, Inverurie, AB51 4SG. Feedback should be received no later than 4pm on 6 March 2026.
- 17.8 A copy of this document will also be sent to HMIE. They will also 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 the minutes of the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. HMIE will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, they may visit the schools 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 HMIE Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meetings. 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 the minute from the public meeting. The report will also include the Authority's response to the HMIE Report, together with a copy of the HMIE 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 HMIE 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 late 2026.

## **19. Decision Making**

- 19.1 The consultation report will be considered by the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee who will be asked to make a comment on the officer recommendation.
- 19.2 Following the Kincardine and Mearns 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.
- 19.3 Following discussion and recommendation at both Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee and Education and Children's Services Committee, Full Council will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report. This is expected to be in Autumn 2026.
- 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 Kinneff 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 Kinneff School, which is currently mothballed, is permanently closed and the catchment area reassigned to that of either Bervie School or Catterline School as outlined in option one and option two above.

20.2 There are strong educational, social and financial arguments in favour of this proposal. The Council believes that the measures proposed in this document will enhance primary school pupils' education experience and increase sustainability and utilisation within the Stonehaven School Cluster.

20.3 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.

20.4 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements.

### Appendices to this report

Appendix A – Option Appraisal Report

Appendix B – SWOT Explanation

Appendix C – Place and Wellbeing Assessment

Appendix D - Financial Template