

Public Meeting Minutes
Statutory Consultation for the Closure of Kinneff School
Tuesday 3 March 2026, 6pm
Kinneff & Catterline Village Hall

Aberdeenshire Council Officers Present: Councillor Keating (Chair of Education & Children's Services Committee), Susan Smith (Head of Education) Maxine Booth (Quality Improvement Manager, Learning Estates), Rachael Goldring (Learning Estates Team Manager), Kelly Tennant (Learning Estates Officer, minutes), Melanie Fowler (Head Teacher of Catterline School), Heather Westacott (Head Teacher of Bervie School), Fiona Thomson (QIO).

1. Welcome and introductions

Councillor Keating introduced himself and the Officers to the meeting, gave an overview of the format of the meeting and welcomed everyone attending. He gave apologies for the previous meeting being changed to online.

He explained that the meeting will be minuted which will be made public as part of the consultation and the previous meeting which was held online on the 4th February will also be included. He passed over to Susan for the overview of the consultation which is being considered.

2. Proposal Overview

Susan Smith explained that in February 2024, a decision was made to temporarily mothball (temporary closure) Kinneff School from August 2024 by the Director of Education & Children's Services, Laurence Findlay. Since, the school has remained non-operational and only one family have expressed an interest in attending Kinneff School since that process took place.

Susan stated that Officers have completed options appraisal for the future of the school. The Kinneff community were given the opportunity to present alternatives to closure and to present their views for the authority to consider and they have been thoroughly analysed. Any potential alternative uses identified by the community cannot be considered at this time as they would require the building to be discontinued as a primary school, which requires a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This is a requirement of the process as we cannot assume the closure at this stage. So, these uses will not be dismissed and can be revisited if a decision to permanently close the school is taken under this stage of the process.

Susan stated that Officers took into account many factors when carrying out the options appraisal and preparing this proposal.

Susan explained that this consultation proposes to discontinue education at Kinneff School and re-assign its catchment area to either Bervie School or

Catterline School. This proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in the current catchment area of Kinneff School. The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures. Susan then passed onto Maxine to present the options for the proposal.

3. Proposal Options

Maxine Booth informed the group that the proposal consists of two options for stakeholders to consider:

Option 1 – Close Kinneff School and merge with Bervie School

Option 2 – Close Kinneff School and merge with Catterline School

Maxine explained that it is important that the proposal does not have a negative impact upon any children currently attending schools affected by this proposal and that they have continuity in their education. Whichever decision is taken, no existing pupils will be required to change their school. This will also apply to any younger siblings of those pupils, they can remain to go to the same school their older siblings goes to.

Maxine passed to Councillor Keating.

4. Chair to open the floor to questions

Councillor Keating opened the meeting to questions, asking attendees if they have a question, to raise the hand and introduce yourself and their interest in the meeting.

Community Council Member: I am representing the Community Council and noting the questions which have come up from the community. There have been discussions on transport issues and school catchments. We want to keep the kids in the area and help Catterline school which has a diminishing roll. We want to keep the kids in zone with the community itself. Also discussed were the alternatives of the building but this has already been covered within the introduction. In regards to school transport, what is the policy when it comes to transport as this has been an issue in the past.

Maxine: When a school goes through a mothballing process, transport is provided to dedicated schools for mothballed pupils effected. If pupils left prior to the mothballing they would not be entitled to the school transport. If the catchment of Kinneff goes to Catterline, the pupils who live more than two miles away will be entitled to transport. This would be the same for Bervie.

Rachael: In the consultation there are two options, Bervie School or Catterline School and we have had concerns previously that there is preference over option one, Bervie instead of Catterline but we want to confirm that there is no preference of one over another, it is more alphabetically rather than preferred option. But with the views we have had so far it looks like there is more preference over Catterline than Bervie.

Community Council Member: We would prefer as Community Council for it to be Catterline school, it is a heartbeat of village and it is important to keep it going.

Councillor Keating: We want to keep schools viable.

Community Council Member: Given the process, when will the decision be made for the consultation?

Councillor Keating: We will come to that in the next part of the meeting.

Community Council Member: If Bervie School is chosen, what would happen with the transport?

Maxine: Those pupils who were at the school at the time in mothballing would still continue to get the transport. Pupils who choose to go to Bervie would also get transport.

Susan: Families who choose to go to Bervie, they would get transport. Those who were at Catterline pupils would not get the transport. We will email the school transport information to you if you would like confirmation in writing.

Rachael: In terms of timings for the process, HMIE will be reviewing the consultation in March and April so it is looking like May or June for Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee and then the following committees after that. The earliest is September for a decision.

5. Next Steps

The chair highlighted that this meeting is regarding the proposal to permanently close Kinneff School which is subject to consultation between 12 January and 6 March 2026, this Friday and this adequately covers the required period of 30 days of term time consultation. He continued to state that if any there are any comments they can be submitted from now until Friday at 4pm, then please submit them.

Comments can be submitted by email to LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or in writing to Learning Estates, Unit 15, Harlaw Way, Inverurie, AB51 4SG.

Councillor Keating highlighted that he would encourage everyone to take part in the consultation and give your opinions via the online survey and a QR code can be found on the poster near the door for access to this. There is also a link to the Education Consultation page, where the documents can be found and the contact details of the Learning Estates Team.

In addition to the community, we are also involving pupils in our discussions, and Head Teachers have been asked to work with pupils to gain their views on the proposals.

Once the consultation period is over, Friday, all written submissions, minutes of both meetings and pupil discussions will be provided to His Majesty's inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMIE) for their consideration. They will then produce a report on the consultation. A final report on the consultation will be presented at three council committees, Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee for consideration and comment with local councillors then onto Education &

Children's Services Committee, which I am part of and 17 Councillors can vote from all across Aberdeenshire for a recommendation then finally to Full Council for a decision.

Following the Full Council meeting, the Council will enter an eight-week call-in period when members of the public can ask Scottish Ministers to call in the decision. If the decision is not called in the Council will be able to the implementation process. If the proposal is called in the School Closure Review Panel will consider the proposal. This may take up to 16 weeks. If the panel grants consent to the proposal, the Council will then commence the implementation process.

6. Close the meeting

Councillor Keating thanked everyone for attending and highlighted importance of gaining feedback regarding this meeting.