Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT: CLOSURE OF BANCHORY-DEVENICK SCHOOL

Consultation Period
28 September 2026 to 4 December 2026

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

- **To permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Hillside School.**

  OR

- **To permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School with secondary education remaining at Portlethen Academy.**

  OR

- **To permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School, with secondary education aligned to Mackie Academy.**

- **The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in the Banchory-Devenick School catchment area.**

- **Depending on the option selected, secondary education would either remain aligned to Portlethen Academy or change to Mackie Academy.**

- **The proposed change, if approved, will be implemented on completion of the school closure process.**

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

The schools affected by this proposal are:

- **Banchory-Devenick School**
- **Hillside School**
- **Lairhillock School**
- **Mackie Academy**
- **Portlethen Academy**

If you have difficulty reading this document please contact the Learning Estates Team on 01771 676600 or Learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

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1. Distribution List

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

This document will be provided to:

- Residents living within the Banchory-Devenick School catchment area
- Parents/Carers of Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Portlethen Academy, Mackie Academy and their cluster primary schools
- Parent Councils of Banchory-Devenick School, Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Mackie Academy and Portlethen Academy
- Parents/Carers of the pupils at Banchory-Devenick School, Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Mackie Academy and Portlethen Academy
- Staff at Banchory-Devenick School, Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Mackie Academy and Portlethen Academy
- Trade Union representatives of the above staff
- Local Early Years providers
- North Kincardine Community Council
- Portlethen and District Community Council
- Stonehaven and District Community Council
- The Community Council for each affected feeder school catchment area
- Local Elected Members
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMIE)

A copy of this document is also available from:

- Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Portlethen Academy and Mackie Academy
- Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB
- Viewmount, Arduthie Road, Stonehaven, AB39 2DQ
- Learning Estates Team – call 01771 676600 or email learningestates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to arrange for a paper copy to be posted.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all relevant education and equalities legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities have a statutory duty to secure adequate and sufficient provision of school education under Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. They are also required 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 School Act 2000).

2.2 Under Scottish Government guidelines, Banchory Devenick School is classed as Accessible Rural. This classification applies to schools serving communities with a population of fewer than 3,000 people and are within a 30-minute drive of a settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.

2.3 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended, requires education authorities to undertake a formal consultation with all relevant stakeholders whenever changes are proposed to the school estate.

3. Introduction

3.1 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 education experience for all pupils in its schools.

3.2 The proposal document is focused on primary education at Banchory-Devenick School (P1-P7) which is located within Banchory-Devenick, Aberdeen, AB12 5XQ in the Kincardine and Mearns Committee area of Aberdeenshire. Banchory-Devenick School is a non-denominational school and delivers primary education for pupils ranging from P1 to P7. The school serves the hamlet of Banchory-Devenick and the surrounding rural areas south of the city of Aberdeen and forms part of the Portlethen Cluster of schools.

3.3 The proposal document contains several maps. PDF copies of all maps will be made available on the Aberdeenshire Council website at the link given within the distribution list. Printed copies of the maps will also be made available on request at Hillside School, Lairhillock School, Mackie Academy and Portlethen Academy.

3.4 The consultation will run from 28 September 2026 until 4 December 2026. A public meeting will be held for all stakeholders on Thursday 29 October 2026 at 6.30pm at Portlethen Academy to discuss the proposal.

3.5 The consultation arrangements for this proposal are set out in detail within Section 17 (Consultation Arrangements) of this document.

4. Details of Proposal

4.1 The Council proposes that Banchory-Devenick School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be implemented at the conclusion of the full statutory consultation process.

4.2 The Council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils living in the Banchory-Devenick School catchment should continue their education at the school they are currently attending. If the proposals are implemented, any siblings of these current pupils would be able to join the same school.

4.3 The school catchment area would be reassigned to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School. The Scottish Government classifies Hillside School as Accessible Small Towns. Lairhillock School is classed as Accessible Rural Areas.[1]

4.4 Table 1 below details the latest school roll forecasts for each school being considered by this proposal, and comparative information about each school such

[1] https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-schools-in-scotland-definition/

as the condition and suitability scores and early years provision (ELC). Each school provides education from P1-P7. The figures are based on 2026 interim school roll forecasts which contain live data and include updated rolls following the movement of pupils from Banchory-Devenick School, any planned housing developments in the catchment area and NHS data.

Table 1 - Proposed School Details

School	Cap	Roll 2026/ 27	Roll 2027/ 28	Roll 2028/ 29	Roll 2029/ 30	Approx Miles from Banchory-Devenick School	Condition Grade	Suitability Grade	Early Years (ELC)	Before /After School
Hillside	509	410	384	365	341	4	A	A	Yes	Yes
Lairhillock	217	135	141	139	137	9	A	A	Yes	Yes

4.5 Under the Scottish Government Core Facts grading for Condition and Suitability, A is classed as Good – performing well and operating efficiently.

4.6 Due to the low number of pupils currently residing in the Banchory-Devenick catchment area, the options identified will have minimal impact on the rolls of the receiving schools.

4.7 It is important that the 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.

4.8 All options have been presented in alphabetical order to maintain neutrality. The ordering of options does not reflect any preference, recommendation, or ranking by Aberdeenshire Council.

Option 1 – Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Hillside School

4.9 Hillside School is located on Newlands Drive, Portlethen, AB12 4LX and serves the community of Hillside, Marywell and the surrounding areas. The school is part of the Portlethen Cluster and pupils progress to Portlethen Academy for secondary education. It is approximately a four-mile drive from Banchory-Devenick School. There is capacity for 509 pupils and a current roll of 410 pupils.

4.10 The school opened in 2017 with 16 classroom areas, 3 large breakout spaces, ELC, Library, Dining Room, PE facilities and community facilities. An additional 4 class extension was completed in 2021. The school also hosts before school and after school provision operated by Flexible Childcare Services Scotland, which runs Monday to Friday each week.

4.11 Hillside School is used regularly by the local community for youth events and community groups, including the local Scout Group, football clubs and Portlethen Sports Club.

Option 2 – Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School.

4.12 Lairhillock School is located at Netherley, Stonehaven, AB39 3QS, approximately 6 miles from Stonehaven and 9 miles, approximately 15 minutes' drive from Banchory-Devenick School. Lairhillock School has a capacity of 217 pupils and a current roll of 135 pupils. The school is within the Stonehaven Cluster and Cults Academy Associated Schools Group where pupils either progress to Mackie Academy or Cults Academy depending on where they live in the catchment area.

4.13 The school opened in 2007 and consists of 7 classroom areas and an ELC. The school has a Library, GP spaces and a hall that is used for P.E, assemblies and dining. The school also hosts out-of-school provision operated by Great Western Pre-School and Out of School Club, which runs after school Monday to Thursday each week.

Option 2a – Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School. The current Banchory-Devenick catchment area will remain within the Portlethen Academy catchment area for secondary education.

4.14 Option 2a is a secondary catchment sub-option of Option 2. Under this sub-option, the Banchory-Devenick School catchment area would be reassigned to Lairhillock School for primary education, while pupils living in the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would remain zoned to Portlethen Academy for secondary education.

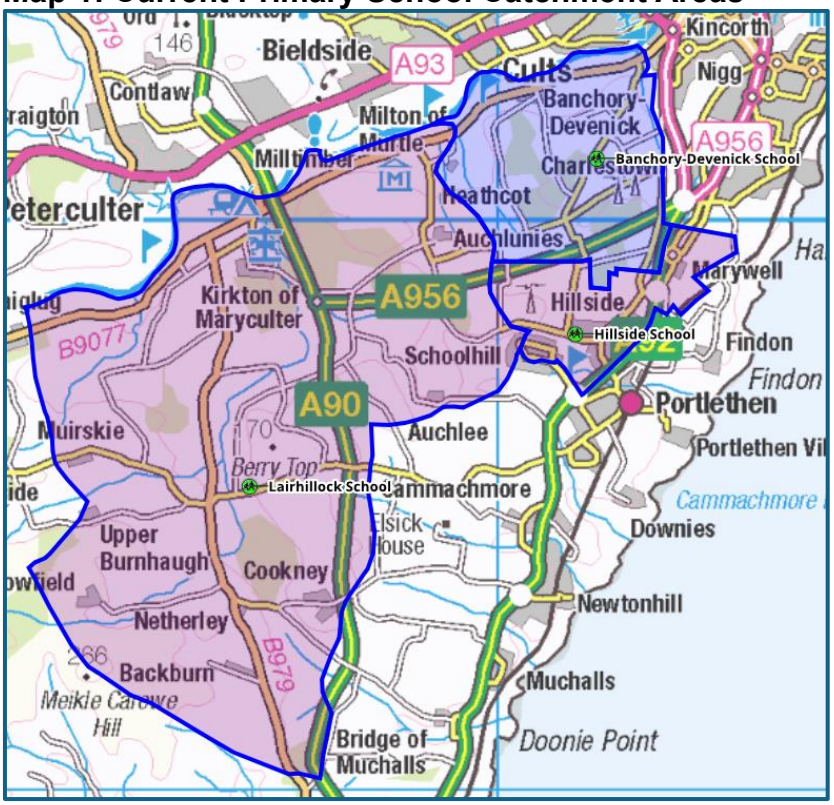
Option 2b – Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School, with pupils in the catchment area zoned to Mackie Academy for secondary education.

4.15 Option 2b is a secondary catchment sub-option of Option 2. Under this sub-option, the Banchory-Devenick School catchment area would be reassigned to Lairhillock School for primary education, while pupils living in the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would be zoned to Mackie Academy for secondary education.

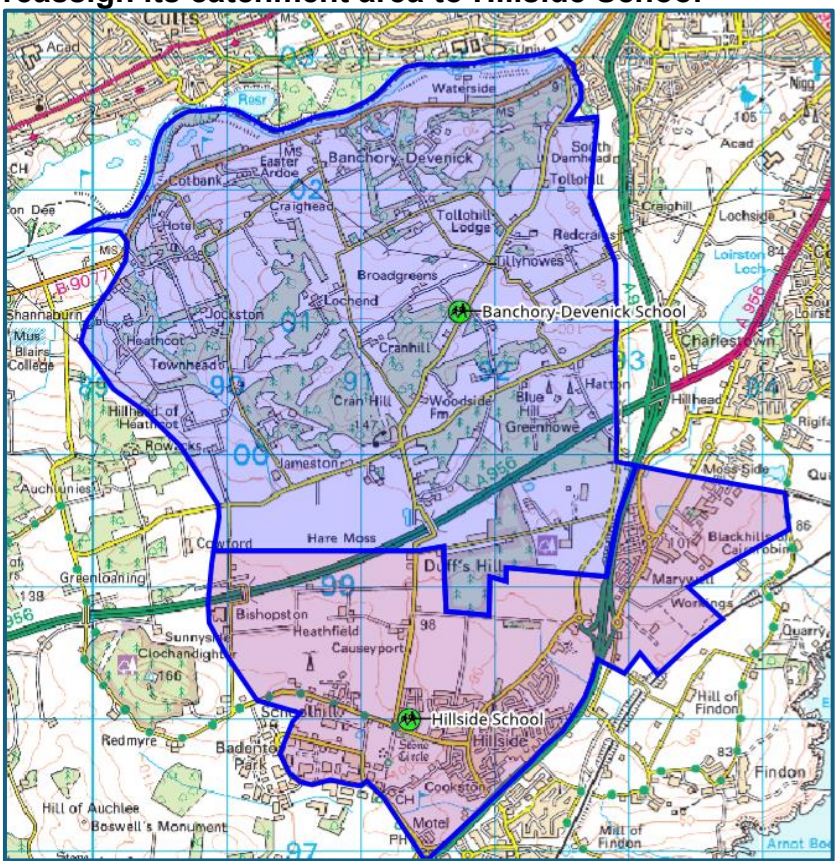
4.16 Under this option, pupils living in the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would progress to Mackie Academy alongside the majority of pupils attending Lairhillock School.

4.17 The proposed catchment areas for each option are shown below. Map 1 illustrates the current primary catchment arrangements for Banchory-Devenick School, Hillside School and Lairhillock School. Maps 2 and 3 show the proposed primary catchment arrangements under each option, while Maps 4 and 5 illustrate the associated secondary school catchment arrangements.

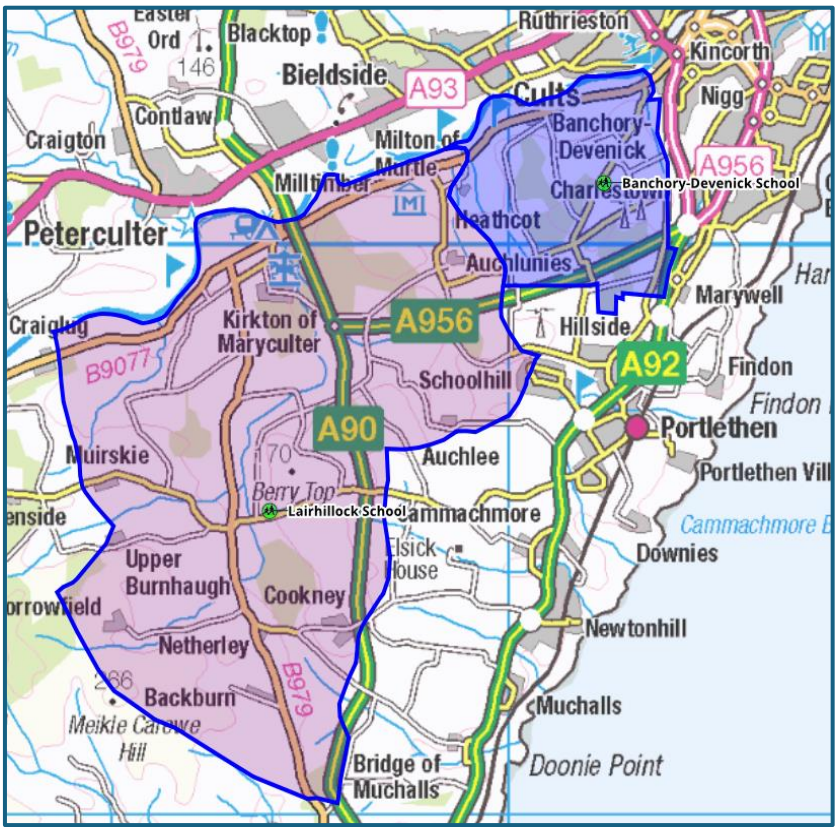
Map 1: Current Primary School Catchment Areas



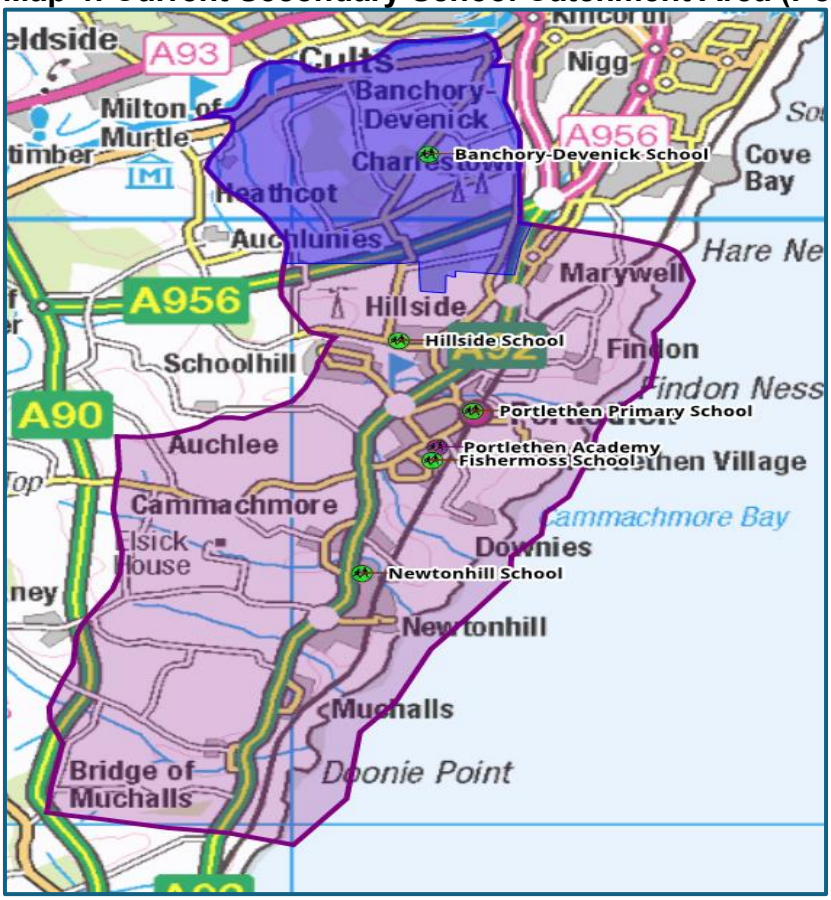
Map 2: Option 1 – Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Hillside School



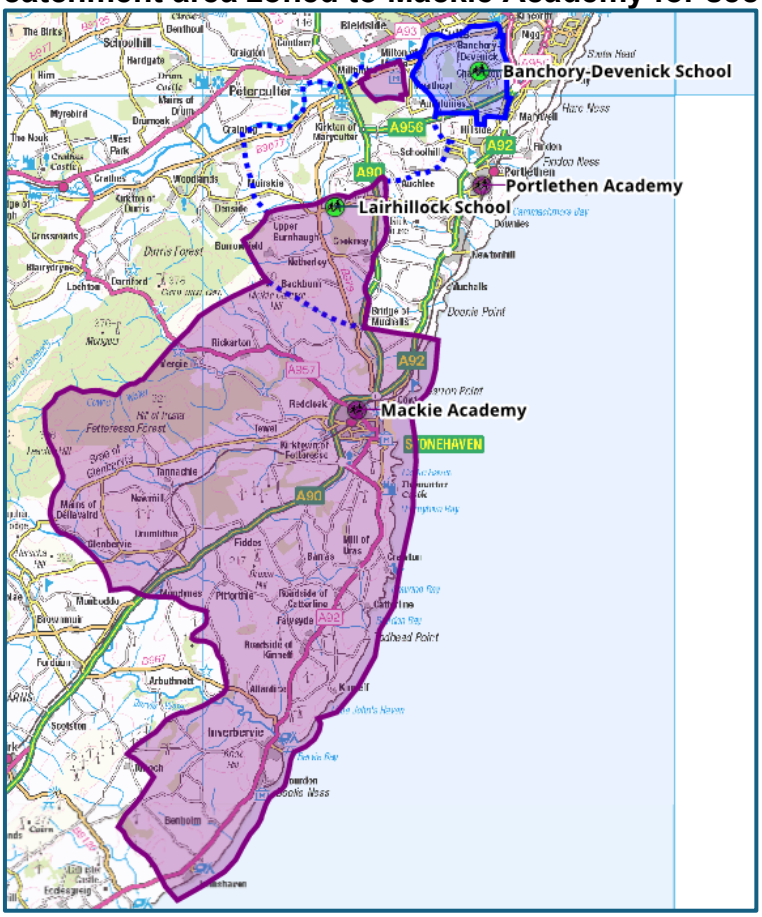
Map 3: Option 2 - Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School.



Map 4: Current Secondary School Catchment Area (Portlethen Academy)



Map 5: Option 2b - Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School, with pupils in the catchment area zoned to Mackie Academy for secondary education.



The map shows the current Mackie Academy catchment area, shown in purple, alongside the existing Banchory-Devenick School catchment area. The dotted line indicates the boundary of the Lairhillock School catchment area.

5. Reason for Proposal

5.1 During December 2025, a routine inspection of the boiler system at Banchory-Devenick School identified significant deterioration in two of the flues, which are now beyond permanent repair. A temporary repair was undertaken to allow the school to remain operational in the short term. However, a full replacement of the flues would be required to ensure the boilers can continue operating. Failure to replace the flues will result in the boilers being condemned and shut down.

5.2 Officers in Education and Children's Services and Property and Facilities Management conducted a high-level interim assessment regarding the next steps and presented a report to the Education and Children's Services Leadership Team on 16 January 2026 and to the Senior Leadership Team on 28 January 2026, which outlined the indicative costs of repair, capacity and utilisation across the Portlethen Cluster and suggested next steps.

5.3 As part of this assessment, officers considered the wider property risks at Banchory-Devenick School. Property and Facilities Management had been progressing a programme of works to address high-risk oil pipes following two oil pipe leaks in schools in recent years. Banchory-Devenick School currently has an underground oil supply pipe, categorising it as high risk. The existing oil tank is also non-compliant due to its current location and would require relocation as part of any remedial works. The estimated cost for this element is approximately £55,000.

5.4 The boilers were installed in 1990 and are now 36 years old, despite the recommended operational lifespan for such boilers being approximately 15 years. Replacement parts are no longer available, meaning any future failures would necessitate a complete boiler replacement. In the event of boiler failure, a transition to LPG would be recommended, if site space allowed, to eliminate risks associated with oil storage and to adopt a more environmentally sustainable solution. The estimated cost for a full boiler replacement is £180,000.

5.5 Given the age of the boilers, the high risk of failure, the urgent flue repairs, and the required works to the oil tank and associated pipework, it was recommended that a full boiler replacement be undertaken. Any investment in flue, tank or pipework repairs would become redundant if a boiler failure were to occur.

5.6 In addition to the heating system, the wider condition of the school building was considered. The flat roof has reached, or is close to reaching, the end of its expected lifecycle, with replacement recommended within the next year at an estimated cost of £65,000. The electrical installation, including power, lighting, emergency lighting and fire alarm systems also requires full replacement at an estimated cost of £150,000. A further urgent requirement was identified as the replacement of the water tank to ensure compliance with current water bylaws, at an estimated cost of £10,000.

5.7 Furthermore, both the toilet facilities and the playground are nearing the end of their expected lifecycles with replacement required within the next one to two years. Estimated costs are £75,000 for the toilet facilities and £50,000 for the playground.

Table 2 below sets out the works required and costs as at January 2026.

Table 2 – Summary of Works and Costs at January 2026

Works Required	**Budget Cost**
Heating Upgrade	£180,000
Water Tank Replacement	£10,000
Flat Roof Upgrade	£65,000
Electrical Upgrade	£150,000
Toilet Upgrade	£75,000
Playground Resurface	£50,000
Total	**£530,000**

5.8 Following consideration of the report, the Senior Leadership Team agreed a relocation of Banchory-Devenick School to Fishermoss School from April 2026 as a school-within-a-school arrangement. This timescale was intended to support a

smooth transition, enabling pupils and staff to remain together and continue operating as Banchory-Devenick School from an alternative location, while maintaining continuity of education in the medium term.

5.9 The Kincardine and Mearns Area Manager and elected members were notified during February 2026. A meeting to inform parents/carers and staff was held on 5 March 2026.

5.10 Following discussions with parents/carers, the school-within-a-school arrangement was not the preferred parental option. Families chose to enrol their children at other primary schools within the Portlethen Cluster and at Lairhillock School, which is part of the Stonehaven Cluster.

5.11 A report was presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 26 March 2026. This identified the critical risks associated with the heating system at Banchory-Devenick School, alongside the school condition position, roll figures and capacity across the Portlethen Cluster.

5.12 Officers were progressing with Phase 3 of the Review of the Learning Estate, which was approved at Education and Children's Services Committee on 1 February 2024. Approval has since been given for Portlethen Cluster to be included in Phase 4 of review of the Learning Estate. The Learning Estates Strategy aims to support a best value estate with financially sustainable provision. As part of each stage of the review, officers compare building capacity with pupil numbers within each cluster to ensure that pupil population and available capacity are appropriately aligned.

5.13 The viability of Banchory-Devenick School would therefore have been assessed as part of Phase 4. Given the low utilisation of the school, the available capacity across the Portlethen Cluster and the absence of a strategic capacity requirement to retain Banchory-Devenick School, it is likely that the long-term sustainability of the school would have required detailed consideration through that review.

5.14 The report considered the strategic and operational viability of Banchory-Devenick School including the lack of available capital budget to progress the identified works, wider Best Value considerations and the utilisation of the school estate across the Portlethen Cluster. It sought approval to launch a statutory consultation on the proposed closure of Banchory-Devenick School.

5.15 In light of the information provided, the Education and Children's Services Committee approved the launch of a statutory consultation on the proposed closure of Banchory-Devenick School.

6. Banchory-Devenick School Details

6.1 The Portlethen Cluster consists of five primary schools: Banchory-Devenick, Fishermoss, Hillside, Newtonhill and Portlethen Primary Schools. Each of the primary schools is zoned to Portlethen Academy for secondary education provision.

6.2 Banchory-Devenick School is located in the hamlet of Banchory-Devenick located a few miles south of the city of Aberdeen in the Lower Deeside area of Aberdeenshire. Banchory-Devenick School is classified as Accessible Rural and has capacity for 70 pupils.

6.3 The remaining schools within the Portlethen Cluster are classified as Accessible Small Town.

6.4 **School Roll, Capacity and Forecasts**
Table 3 below details the roll and capacity of each school affected by this proposal, alongside the forecast roll for the period 2026 to 2030 for each primary school in the Portlethen Cluster. The figures are based on an interim 2026 school roll forecast which contains live data, updated rolls following the movement of pupils from Banchory-Devenick School, any planned housing developments in the catchment area and NHS data. The table also contains the condition and suitability grading given to each school.

6.5 Table 3 – Portlethen Schools, Lairhillock School, Mackie and Portlethen Academy

School	Condition	Suitability	Capacity	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Fishermoss	B	B	358	252	234	212	193	193
Hillside	A	A	509	410	384	365	341	316
Portlethen	B	A	342	197	183	173	168	157
Newtonhill	B	A	459	360	379	410	418	417
Portlethen Academy	A	A	1010	964	1023	1075	1108	1105
Lairhillock (Stonehaven Cluster)	A	A	217	135	141	139	137	135
Mackie Academy	B	B	1435	1155	1192	1254	1264	1228

6.6 The Portlethen Cluster has capacity for 1,738 primary-aged pupils and is currently operating at 70% capacity. It is forecast that, by 2030, there will be 653 spare primary places across the cluster, which is equivalent to a two-stream school. Given the available capacity within the cluster and the proximity of neighbouring schools, there is no operational or strategic requirement to return Banchory-Devenick School to operational status.

6.7 The 2026 Interim School Roll Forecasts can be viewed at:
https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/hub-page/ecs-learning-estates

6.8 At the start of the academic year in August 2025, the Banchory-Devenick School roll was 30 pupils, which gave an entitlement of two classes. This reduced during the session to 25 pupils, which falls within the one-class entitlement category; however, the school was still operating with two classes before it became non-operational. This consisted of a P1–3 class of 11 pupils and a P4–7 class of 14 pupils.

6.9 Of the 25 pupils on roll, only 9 (36%) resided within the catchment area. The remaining 16 pupils (64%) attended from outwith the catchment area, including 12

pupils (48%) attending through placing requests from Aberdeen City Council and 4 pupils (16%) who were zoned to other Aberdeenshire schools. This demonstrates that the school was significantly reliant on out-of-zone and cross-boundary enrolments. At the same time, the majority of children residing within the catchment area attended Banchory-Devenick School, with only a small number attending other schools through placing requests.

Table 4 – Pupil Residency and Enrolment 2025/26

Zoned School Catchment Area	Number of Pupils	% of School Roll
Within Banchory-Devenick School catchment area	9	36%
Zoned to other Aberdeenshire Schools	4	16%
Placing Requests from Aberdeen City Council	12	48%

Key Fact: Only 36% of pupils attending Banchory-Devenick School lived within the school's designated catchment area, while 64% attended from outwith the catchment area.

6.10 The Primary 1 enrolment period took place between 12 and 16 January 2026. During this period, fewer than five applications were received including out-of-zone applications.

6.11 NHS data identifies eight children within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area who are due to start Primary 1 between 2026 and 2029. Previous enrolment patterns show that some in-zone families have chosen nearby schools in Aberdeenshire, while the school has also received a number of placing requests from families resident in Aberdeen City.

6.12 There are currently no masterplans or major housing developments allocated within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area in the adopted Local Development Plan, and no housing applications have been submitted within the catchment area for at least the past 15 years. While a bid site has been submitted through the emerging Local Development Plan process, there are currently no approved housing allocations that would be expected to generate a significant increase in the number of in-zone pupils. Should the site be allocated within the Local Development Plan, the school roll forecast assumes a pupil yield of 0.3 pupils per dwelling. Under this scenario, the Portlethen Cluster would retain sufficient capacity to accommodate any additional pupil demand arising from the development.

6.13 The school participated in national programmes and accreditation schemes including Rights Respecting Schools, Reading Schools, Eco Schools, Fairtrade Schools, Social Enterprise, Mind Safe and AB Safe. Wider curriculum opportunities included pupil participation groups, charity and campaigning projects, STEM and CREST Award activities, Active Schools programmes, Bikeability training and

Forest School activities. An active Parent Council contributed to school life through fundraising, community events and support for educational resources and activities.

7. Educational Benefit Statement

7.1 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 education 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.

7.2 In November 2025, Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting People, Places and Learning' was refreshed and updated to reflect national drivers for change. Local authorities are required to take account of the 10 Guiding Principles in planning changes to their school estate. The principles specifically affecting this proposal are:

- **Education** – Support and facilitate excellent learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners.
- **Engagement** – Engage with the community to understand their local needs, including under-represented voices.
- **Place** – Provide the right facilities in the right place to ensure public services are inclusive, sustainable and effective in improving people's outcomes.
- **Data informed decisions** – Inform good decisions through the use of clear and cohesive data.
- **Public Resources** – Ensure best use of public resources to meet current and future needs.
- **Condition** – Manage and maintain environments in a good condition.

7.3 The issues at Banchory-Devenick School arose as a consequence of significant building infrastructure failure associated with the school's heating and boiler system. The failure rendered the building unsuitable for occupation and unable to support the continued delivery of education in a safe, warm and appropriate learning environment. As a result, pupils have been supported to enrol at alternative schools, ensuring their education is continued and appropriate transitions were put in place.

7.4 The prime consideration throughout this process has been to ensure that children receive their education in a safe, stable and reliable learning environment. The condition of the boiler system at Banchory-Devenick School presented a significant risk to the continuity of education, as any further failure could have rendered the school unable to operate.

7.5 The two proposed receiving schools for the Banchory-Devenick catchment area, Hillside School and Lairhillock School, both provide primary education in well-resourced and welcoming learning environments. Pupils have continued to access a broad curriculum, appropriate support and opportunities for learning and achievement within established school communities.

7.6 Pupils benefit from increased opportunities for collaborative learning, teamwork and peer to peer support. Larger year groups provide greater flexibility for teachers to organise learning activities and create varied learning groups to meet a range of needs.

7.7 Pupils are educated within larger age-appropriate peer groups and fewer multi-stage composite class arrangements. Larger peer groups can support class dynamics by enabling pupils to share learning experiences, form positive friendships, collaborate with a wider range of peers and develop social skills.

7.8 Larger schools are also more likely to represent a broader cross-section of society. Pupils can benefit from being part of diverse classes where they hear and engage with viewpoints that may differ from their own.

7.9 Access to a wider peer group can reduce the risk of social isolation and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop communication, resilience and collaboration skills.

7.10 A merged school community allows pupils to shape a shared identity while retaining valued partnerships. Both Hillside School and Lairhillock School provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to participate in leadership, citizenship and wider achievement activities. These include buddying programmes, Play Leaders, Rising Stars, focus groups and pupil participation groups. At Hillside School, pupils are also involved in groups such as Diversity Ambassadors, which promote inclusion and pupil voice. At Lairhillock School, pupils undertake leadership responsibilities through initiatives such as the Student Council and buddying programmes for younger pupils and new school entrants. These opportunities support the development of confidence, leadership skills, teamwork and active participation in school life.

7.11 Supported transitions and larger peer groups can help pupils build resilience, self-esteem and readiness for P7 to S1 progression. Increased opportunities for collaborative learning can also support pupils in preparing for transition to secondary education.

7.12 Hillside School is part of the Portlethen Cluster and has established transition arrangements to Portlethen Academy. Lairhillock School is part of the Stonehaven Cluster, with pupils transitioning either to Mackie Academy or Cults Academy (Aberdeen City) depending on where they live within the school catchment area. If option 2a is preferred, there will be a requirement for transition arrangements with Portlethen Academy; however Lairhillock School is adept at managing multiple transition destinations. If Option 2b is preferred, there will be continuity in the cluster arrangements.

7.13 Parents and carers will have the opportunity to become part of a larger parent community. The benefits of parental involvement in children's education are clearly recognised, and any increase in parental engagement has the potential to directly benefit children and their learning.

7.14 Both proposed receiving schools offer increased opportunities for fundraising, partnerships and community links due to their larger school rolls and established wider school communities.

7.15 An increased school roll can support the sustainability and viability of school provision and may provide opportunities for a broader range of educational and social experiences.

7.16 The Council recognises that some stakeholders value the characteristics of a small rural school environment. These views will be considered, together with all other representations received during the statutory consultation process, before any final decision is taken on the proposal.

8. Examination of Alternatives

8.1 A preliminary assessment of alternatives was undertaken to consider the future provision of primary education within the catchment area, following the identification that significant capital investment would be required to repair or replace the boiler system and undertake other essential building works to ensure the school remained a safe and suitable environment for learning.

8.2 Four broad options were initially identified:

- Identify available funding and undertake the works required
- Identify an alternative existing building within the catchment area to allow the school to become operational
- Operate as a school within a school at Fishermoss School
- Permanently close Banchory-Devenick School and rezone the catchment area

8.3 Officers considered whether an alternative building within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area could be identified to allow the school to continue operating. No suitable buildings were identified that could support the continued delivery of primary education. In addition, there is sufficient capacity within existing schools across the wider cluster to accommodate pupils from the catchment area. As a result, this option was not considered viable.

8.4 In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternative to closure. As Banchory-Devenick is classified as a rural school, the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 places additional requirements on the Council to consider alternatives to closure and provide stakeholders with an opportunity to present alternatives for consideration.

8.5 The Banchory-Devenick community were asked to present alternatives to closure and to give their views for the authority to consider.

8.6 A drop-in-session was held for members of the Banchory-Devenick community at Portlethen Academy on 14 May 2026. An online survey was also made available to all interested parties. There were 28 responses to the online survey.

8.7 The majority of responses indicated a clear preference for securing the funding to repair or replace the boiler and enable the school to become operational, with any non-essential improvement works being undertaken at a later stage.

Council response to survey comments on repair works and reopening

8.8 The Council recognises that a number of respondents would prefer investment to be secured to allow Banchory-Devenick School to reopen, with essential repairs undertaken initially and other non-emergency works progressed at a later date. This option has been considered carefully. However, the Council must manage investment across a large and diverse school estate, where the total cost of identified maintenance and improvement requirements exceeds the funding available in any one year. Investment decisions must therefore be prioritised using factors such as condition, risk, educational suitability, operational need, value for money and the long-term sustainability of individual assets.

8.9 The works required at Banchory-Devenick School are not limited to a single element of repair. The boiler, flue system, underground oil pipework and associated oil tank arrangements have been assessed collectively, as they operate as part of one heating system. The flues are no longer suitable for permanent repair and now require replacement. Undertaking only selected works would not remove the risk of further significant failures and could result in additional expenditure at a later date.

8.10 In addition, the school's electrical infrastructure has insufficient capacity and would require an upgraded supply from SSE. The existing electrical system is also at the end of its expected life and would require replacement as part of any wider programme of works. These issues must be considered alongside the wider condition of the building when assessing whether reopening the school would represent a sustainable and cost-effective long-term solution.

8.11 The Council's assessment has been informed by condition surveys, technical advice and budget estimates. The cost estimates are based on professional advice, previous project experience and prevailing market rates.

8.12 Some respondents suggested extending the Banchory-Devenick catchment area to include nearby local schools, such as Kaimhill School in Aberdeen City, or rezoning the Blairs area from Lairhillock School to Banchory-Devenick School to increase the school roll and support longer-term viability.

8.13 Both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have been reviewing catchment areas with the aim of ensuring that pupils resident in Aberdeen City are zoned to Aberdeen City schools and pupils resident in Aberdeenshire are zoned to Aberdeenshire schools. Aberdeenshire Council would not extend the Banchory-Devenick catchment area into the Kaimhill School catchment area. It is also unlikely that Aberdeen City Council would fund transport for pupils who can currently walk to their zoned school. In addition, fewer than five placing requests have been received in the last five years from pupils zoned to Kaimhill School seeking to attend Banchory-Devenick School. This level of demand would not support the proposition put forward.

8.14 Respondents were also invited to provide suggestions for alternative uses of the building should it permanently close as a school. Suggestions included retaining the building for community use, such as a social space, business hub, gym, nursery or outdoor learning centre.

8.15 Any alternative community use of the building could only be progressed if Banchory-Devenick School were formally closed and the property was no longer required for the delivery of education. The future use of the building would be subject to a separate assessment undertaken in accordance with the Council's asset management and disposal procedures.

9. Options Assessment and Discounted Options

9.1 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required as to the most appropriate way to rezone the school catchment area. The following section assesses the available options for future catchment arrangements.

9.2 Following the decision of parents/carers to enrol at alternative schools, a full options appraisal was carried out on the future of Banchory-Devenick School.

9.3 Officers applied an approved methodology to assess the identified options regarding the future of Banchory-Devenick School. The process included a detailed analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).

9.4 The options appraisal process considers key aspects of each scenario, such as the impact on pupils, on resources and staffing, building condition and suitability, parental expectations and the impact upon community access to the building. Each factor is given a fixed score, which then allows a quantitative assessment of each scenario. Other aspects taken into consideration for the overall recommendations are transport, the outcome of engagement carried out with the Banchory-Devenick community, parents/carers, Learning Estate sustainability and environmental impact.

9.5 Table 5 identifies the two highest ranking options from the options appraisal: the permanent closure of Banchory-Devenick School and reassignment of its catchment area to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School.

Table 5 – Outcome of Options Appraisal

Options
Option 1 – Close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Hillside School
Option 2 – Close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Lairhillock School. This option includes two secondary catchment sub-options. Option 2a – pupils living in the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would remain zoned to Portlethen Academy for secondary education or Option 2b - pupils living in the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would be zoned to Mackie Academy for secondary education.

9.6 Both schools have sufficient capacity to accommodate the small number of pupils residing within the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area, are in good condition and suitability, and would provide sustainable long-term primary education provision. The following section considers each option in more detail, including the implications for catchment arrangements, school capacity, continuity of learning, transport and secondary transition.

9.7 The permanent closure of Banchory-Devenick School and reassignment of its catchment area to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School would align with Council policy and the Learning Estates Strategy. No capital expenditure would be required. While there would be increased transport distances and associated costs, pupils living within the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would be entitled to school transport if the closure and catchment reassignment were approved.

10. Discounted Options

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

10.2 **Discounted Option 1 – Close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Fishermoss School**

10.3 This option ranked third highest in the options appraisal and shared many of the strengths and weaknesses identified for Hillside School and Lairhillock School. Fishermoss School was selected as the preferred location by officers for the temporary school-within-a-school arrangement when Banchory-Devenick School became non-operational, as it was the only school within the Portlethen Cluster with suitable accommodation immediately available to accommodate pupils and staff.

10.4 Although the option was considered viable from an educational and operational perspective, the decision of parents to enrol at alternative schools resulted in this option being discounted. Following the enrolment of former Banchory-Devenick pupils at alternative schools, there was no longer an operational requirement to progress the school-within-a-school arrangement at Fishermoss School. Furthermore, the option would not address the wider issue of surplus capacity

across the Portlethen Cluster or provide a long-term solution for primary education provision.

10.5 **Discounted Option 2 – Close Banchory-Devenick School and reassign its catchment area to Portlethen Primary School**

10.6 This option ranked fourth highest in the options appraisal. Portlethen Primary School would provide access to a larger peer group, modern learning facilities and established transition arrangements to Portlethen Academy.

10.7 However, it did not score as highly as either Hillside School or Lairhillock School. Hillside School is geographically closer to the existing Banchory-Devenick catchment area and achieved the highest overall score in the appraisal. In addition, Lairhillock School offers a more comparable rural learning environment, which was identified as an important consideration by many parents during the informal engagement process. As a result, whilst Portlethen Primary School represents a viable option, it was not considered to offer the same overall strategic, educational and community benefits as the higher-ranked options.

10.8 **Discounted Option 3 - Extending the catchment area**

10.9 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. Pupil numbers within the Portlethen Cluster reflect this wider trend, therefore extending the catchment area would not necessarily improve utilisation and could have a detrimental impact on neighbouring schools.

10.10 **Discounted Option 4 – Undertake the works at Banchory-Devenick School to allow the school to become operational.**

10.11 This option would retain primary education provision within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area and would improve the condition of the school building through investment in the heating system and other identified infrastructure works. However, a temporary relocation of pupils and staff would still be required while the works were undertaken, resulting in continued disruption to education provision in the short term.

10.12 While this option would be an alternative to closure and would allow the school to reopen, it will require significant capital investment in a school with a low roll and high levels of surplus capacity across the wider Portlethen Cluster. The investment would not address the long-term utilisation of the school estate or the wider strategic capacity position within the cluster. As a result, the option does not align with the objectives of Aberdeenshire Council's Learning Estate Strategy, which seeks to ensure a sustainable and financially viable school estate. In addition, there is currently no identified capital funding available to undertake the required works. Given the scale of investment required and the competing demands across the wider school estate, this option was not considered to represent the best use of public resources and was therefore discounted from further consideration.

10.13 Having considered the alternatives identified through officer assessment and stakeholder engagement, no other viable alternatives to closure were identified.

11. Effect on the Local Community

11.1 Aberdeenshire Council recognises that the uncertainty surrounding the future of the school has impacted the community. The statutory consultation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to consider the proposal and contribute their views before any decision is made.

11.2 Banchory-Devenick is a small rural settlement located a few miles south of the city of Aberdeen. Residents generally travel to Aberdeen City or Portlethen to access services such as GP and dental surgeries, libraries, sports facilities, shops, post office services and other community facilities.

11.3 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (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 Banchory-Devenick and Findon data zone is ranked at 5484. This indicates that pupils living within the Banchory-Devenick School catchment are not considered living in socio-economically deprived households.

11.4 While operational, there was no breakfast club or after-school club provision available from the school site. Community use of the building was limited, with occasional use by the Parent Council for meetings and associated activities.

11.5 The informal engagement responses indicated a strong preference for the building to remain in community use should it no longer be required as a school. Aberdeenshire Council would be willing to explore alternative uses for the building with the local community during the consultation period and beyond, subject to the Council's asset management and disposal procedures.

11.6 Interest has been expressed to the Council regarding an asset transfer of the school building to deliver a community-run facility. This interest has been referred to the Kincardine and Mearns Area Manager for assessment.

11.7 A community operated facility would not be an Aberdeenshire Council operated primary school. Therefore whilst this may be a viable alternative use for the building that may have educational uses, the proposal to permanently discontinue the building as a Council-operated school remains appropriate.

11.8 Aberdeenshire Council has an Asset Disposal Policy which must be followed when buildings or land are no longer required for their original purpose. If the community are interested in retaining the building, this would have to be fully assessed through the asset disposal procedure. Thereafter, any surplus council sites can be subject to an Asset Transfer Request.

12. School Transport

12.1 The Council provides free home-to-school transport in accordance with the School Transport guidelines. Primary pupils are entitled to transport where they live more than two miles walking distance from their zoned school, or where the walking route is assessed as unsafe for a child accompanied by a responsible adult. Secondary pupils are entitled to transport where they live more than three miles walking distance from their zoned secondary school.

12.2 In line with the School Transport guidelines where practicable, primary pupils are not expected to travel for more than 45 minutes on school transport. Assessment of the options identified within this proposal indicates that journey times would remain within these guidelines.

12.3 Prior to Banchory-Devenick School becoming non-operational, one dedicated school transport contract was provided for 11 pupils at a cost of £136.59 per day.

12.4 Following the temporary closure of the school, pupils transferred to a number of alternative schools. Some pupils were accommodated within existing transport contracts, while additional transport arrangements were established where required. These arrangements have subsequently been incorporated into wider school transport contracts serving the area.

12.5 The transport arrangements currently in place include pupils who were previously attending Banchory-Devenick School through placing requests. Existing arrangements will continue for those pupils who were on roll at the time the school became non-operational until they leave primary education. However, these arrangements would not automatically apply to future placing requests.

12.6 The closure of Banchory-Devenick School would not affect journey times for current pupils, as they are already being transported to alternative schools in the area. However, when comparing travel times from Banchory-Devenick School to Hillside School and Lairhillock School, the journey to Lairhillock School, which is the furthest of the two schools, would be approximately 10 minutes longer. If Option 2b were implemented, pupils residing within the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would progress to Mackie Academy for secondary education. The journey time from Banchory-Devenick to Mackie Academy is approximately 20-25 minutes, compared with approximately 10 minutes to Portlethen Academy. This would result in an increase in journey time of approximately 10-15 minutes and would remain within the Council's School Transport Guidelines.

12.7 The educational and operational implications of school transport are set out in this section. The financial implications associated with transport provision are detailed in Section 13.

13. Financial Implications

13.1 The estimated annual operating cost of Banchory-Devenick School is £403,942. This includes employee, building, school operational and transport costs, less income associated with the school.

13.2 If Banchory-Devenick School permanently closes, additional annual costs are estimated at £62,313 for Lairhillock School and £11,843 for Hillside School. These costs principally relate to home-to-school transport, learning materials, catering, and other pupil-related expenditure. No additional teaching, support, janitorial, cleaning or property costs have been identified at either receiving school, as the transferring pupils can be accommodated within existing capacity.

13.3 After taking account of the additional costs associated with the receiving schools, the estimated annual recurring revenue saving is £329,786.

13.4 The principal additional cost arising from the proposal relates to home-to-school transport. The annual transport cost associated with Banchory-Devenick School prior to it becoming non-operational was estimated at £26,242. The financial template is based on current pupils attending the receiving schools and reflects the current distribution of pupils across those schools. It is not a projection of the final transport cost under each option. Pupils who have moved outwith the authority since Banchory-Devenick School became non-operational are not factored into the calculations. Current annual transport costs are estimated at £63,156 for pupils attending Lairhillock School and £10,497 for pupils attending Hillside School, resulting in an estimated net increase in annual transport expenditure of £47,411 based on current arrangements. If the catchment area is reassigned to one receiving school following consultation, future transport arrangements would be based on that decision.

13.5 Given the small number of pupils residing within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area, future transport costs are not expected to increase significantly as a result of the final catchment decision. If Hillside School is selected, the annual transport cost is expected to remain broadly in line with current Hillside transport costs. If Lairhillock School is selected, the annual transport cost may reduce over time as the number of pupils requiring transport is expected to decrease in future years.

13.6 If Option 2b is selected and pupils progress to Mackie Academy for secondary education, any additional transport costs are expected to be minimal, as pupils are anticipated to be accommodated on existing secondary school transport contracts.

13.7 While the school building remains non-operational pending a decision on its future, annual property costs of approximately £14,007 are expected to continue. These costs include property insurance, non-domestic rates, water and sewerage charges, energy, essential building maintenance and grounds maintenance.

13.8 No capital works have been identified as necessary at either Hillside School or Lairhillock School to accommodate the transferring pupils. The assessment identifies repair and maintenance works at Banchory-Devenick School, estimated at over £500,000, which includes the replacement boiler.

13.9 Full details of the financial assessment are provided in the financial template attached as Appendix 1.

14. Sustainability

14.1 The Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) emissions for Banchory-Devenick, Hillside and Lairhillock Schools are detailed in Table 6 below. The permanent closure of Banchory-Devenick School is expected to result in a reduction in operational carbon emissions associated with the school building. The receiving schools are not expected to experience any significant increase in utility consumption as a result of accommodating pupils from the Banchory-Devenick catchment area. Any increase is likely to relate mainly to additional hot water use, which represents a relatively small proportion of overall utility consumption. Therefore, the closure of Banchory-Devenick School would be expected to remove the majority of the building's operational carbon emissions, estimated at approximately 18 tonnes of CO_2 per year, without creating a corresponding increase in emissions at either receiving school.

Table 6 – Four year Average CO_2 Emissions

School	Average tCO_2 Emissions (tonnes)	Impacted by the permanent closure of Banchory-Devenick School?
Banchory-Devenick School	18	Yes
Hillside School	79	No
Lairhillock School	76	No

14.2 The environmental impact associated with additional transport requirements is expected to be limited due to the relatively short distances involved and the small number of pupils affected. The Banchory-Devenick School pupils who were on roll at the time of the school becoming non-operational will be transported to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School by the Council rather than travelling individually, as they did through placing requests.

14.3 It is recognised that changes to secondary school provision may increase transport-related emissions where pupils are required to travel further. However, any increase in transport emissions is expected to be outweighed by the reduction in emissions associated with the operation and maintenance of school buildings. The proposal is therefore anticipated to have a positive overall carbon impact.

14.4 The distances from Hillside School and Lairhillock School to Banchory-Devenick School are approximately 4 miles and 9 miles, respectively. Children residing in the Banchory-Devenick catchment area are already transported to alternative schools by authority-provided transport or their parents/carers.

14.5 Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced by many rural authorities in Scotland. Rural schools with small numbers of pupils on roll change the teaching dynamic, requiring teachers to be highly adept in managing the curriculum,

differentiation and assessment for pupils from P1-P7 in just one or 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 require 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 Banchory-Devenick School is currently non-operational, staffing allocation and arrangements will be unaffected if the permanent closure of the school is approved.

15.2 All staff received appropriate guidance and support from their line managers throughout the process of relocation.

15.3 The current staffing allocation with full-time equivalent (FTE) for each school is set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7 – Staffing levels for each school

Position	Banchory-Devenick School (if reopened)	Hillside School	Lairhillock School
Head Teacher	1.00	1.00	1.00
Deputy Head Teacher	-	2.00	-
Principal Teacher	-	1.00	-
Teacher	-	12.00	6.00
Management Time	0.7	1.7	0.1
Non-Class Contact Time	0.11	1.67	0.67
Cluster Business Assistant	-	1.66	0.80
Admin Support Assistant	0.57	-	-
Pupil Support Assistant	0.57	5.26	1.97
Early Years Practitioner	-	6.21	1.19
Early Years Lead Practitioner	-	2.07	1.04
Early Years Senior Practitioner	-	1.04	1.04
Unit Cook / Supervisor	-	1.00	0.93
Catering Assistant	0.36	3.00	1.36
Cleaner	0.33	3.03	1.14

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

15.5 Janitorial provision is allocated to each school based on the Portlethen and Stonehaven Cluster allocations.

15.6 Trade union representatives 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 for 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 as part of the options appraisal process and has been updated in the formulation of the statutory consultation proposal.

16.2 The purpose of an IIA is to examine policies and practices 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 principal equalities consideration arising from the proposal relates to the increased journey distance to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School for children living within the Banchory-Devenick School catchment area. However, this impact is mitigated by the fact that all current pupils are already attending alternative schools and have been travelling under established transport arrangements since Banchory-Devenick School became non-operational in April 2026. Consequently, the proposal would not introduce any new transport requirements for current primary aged pupils.
If Option 2b were implemented, pupils residing within the current Banchory-Devenick catchment area would progress to Mackie Academy for secondary education. This would increase the secondary school journey time by approximately 10-15 minutes when compared with Portlethen Academy. Any resulting transport arrangements would remain within the Council's School Transport Guidelines.

16.4 It is also recognised that a significant proportion of pupils who previously attended Banchory-Devenick School were resident in Aberdeen City and attended through placing requests. However, the proposal must be considered in relation to Aberdeenshire Council's statutory responsibility to provide education for children residing within the Banchory-Devenick catchment area.

16.5 Funded school transport would be provided for all secondary school age children depending on which option is selected. This would ensure that pupils living within the catchment area continue to have access to appropriate home-to-school transport.

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 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 26 March 2026, Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Children's Services Committee was asked to agree that a proposal document should be issued as the basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal until after the consultation period has ended. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and reach a final view on the proposal.

17.2 A copy of this document will be issued to all the consultees listed within the distribution list. In addition, the proposal document will be published on the Council's website and Engage HQ page and can be accessed via the following links: https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/education-consultations/ and https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/banchory-devenick-school

17.3 The period for consultation will run from **28 September 2026 until 4 December 2026**, which covers a period of 30 school days.

17.4 A public meeting will be held at Portlethen Academy on **29 October 2026 at 6.30pm**. Anyone who wishes to attend the public meeting is welcome to do so. 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 staff working at the affected schools to discuss the proposals. Opportunities will also be arranged for pupils at schools potentially affected by the proposal to engage in the consultation in a manner appropriate to their age.

17.6 An online survey is available as part of the consultation. The survey can be completed via the following link or by scanning the QR code below: https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/banchory-devenick-school

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17.7 The Council will also consider any written comments, which should be emailed to the Learning Estates Team at LearningEstates@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. Alternatively, comments can be sent to the Learning Estates Team, Education and Children's Services, Aberdeenshire Council, Unit 15, Harlaw Way, Inverurie, AB51 4SG. Feedback should be received no later than 4pm on 4 December 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 any oral or written

representations made at 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, survey results, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made to it by any person at the public meeting. It will then prepare a report on the consultation. This report will be published in electronic format and will be available on the Council website. Anyone making 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 HMIE report, a response to issues raised through any written or oral representations it has received, 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 representations (both written and oral) that it 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 A final decision is likely to be made by the Council on the proposed change in summer 2027.

19. Decision Making

19.1 The consultation report will be considered first by Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee, they will be asked to make a comment on the officers' recommendation.

19.2 Following Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee, Education and Children's Services Committee will be asked to make a recommendation as to whether the proposed changes are implemented.

19.3 Following discussion and recommendation at Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee and Education and Children's Services Committee, Full Council will consider the report and will 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 Banchory-Devenick 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 the decision, to decide whether to call in the proposal. The Council must publish the fact that Scottish Ministers have been notified and that representations can be made to Scottish Ministers within the first three weeks of the eight-week period. Scottish Ministers will take into account any relevant representations made to them by any person within the first three weeks. The Council may not proceed with 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 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 consideration, Aberdeenshire Council recommends that Banchory-Devenick School is permanently closed and the catchment area reassigned to either Hillside School or Lairhillock School as outlined in the options above.

20.2 The information set out in this document identifies a range of educational, social and financial considerations associated with the proposal. These include access to sustainable and well-resourced learning environments and the long-term sustainability of education provision within the area. All consultation responses will be carefully considered before any decision is reached.

20.3 If Option 1 is chosen following consultation, the Banchory-Devenick catchment area would be reassigned to Hillside School. Pupils would remain within the Portlethen Cluster, with established transition arrangements to Portlethen Academy for secondary education.

20.4 If Option 2 is chosen following consultation, the Banchory-Devenick catchment area would be reassigned to Lairhillock School. Under Option 2a pupils would continue to be zoned to Portlethen Academy for secondary education. Under Option 2b pupils would be zoned to Mackie Academy for secondary education.

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