

## **REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2021**

### **LEARNING ESTATES STRATEGY**

#### **1 Reason for Report / Summary**

- 1.1 Provide the revised Learning Estates Strategy in accordance with Scotland's Learning Estates Strategy, Connecting People, Places and Learning.

#### **2 Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the Learning Estates Strategy as attached at Appendix 1.**

#### **3 Purpose and Decision Making Route**

- 3.1 At its meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018, Education and Children's Services approved the Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate.
- 3.2 The National Learning Estate Strategy, Connecting People, Places and Learning was produced in 2019 and set out 10 guiding principles. Aberdeenshire Learning Estate Strategy has been reviewed and updated in line with this document.

#### **4 Discussion**

- 4.1 This strategy has been reviewed through work with the Northern Alliance. It makes reference to other reviews and strategies which impact upon the Learning Estate, including transport, catering and digital estate. Updates to the strategy have also been completed through collaboration with officers across Aberdeenshire.
- 4.2 This strategy supports the Learning Estate Plan which will be presented at each Area Committee and Education and Children's Services Committee in May 2021.
- 4.3 There is also reference to the importance of the target to ensure all buildings in Scotland have net-zero emissions by 2045. Aberdeenshire Council, within its Environmental and Climate Change policy, have set an annual carbon budget figure each year to keep the council on track for its commitment to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 and to be net-zero by 2045.

## 5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

### 5.1

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Education” and “Health and Wellbeing” within the pillar “Our People”, and the “Economy and Enterprise” within the “Our Economy” pillar, securing continuous improvement in outcomes for ALL children and young people and to have better, integrated working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people.

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Estate Modernisation” within the pillar “Our Economy”, having an estate that is sustainable, efficient and fit for purpose.

5.2 This report helps deliver the Scotland’s Learning Estates Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning.

5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities			X
Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability			X
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing			X

5.4 An equality impact assessment is not required because any review following this report will include its own equality impact assessment and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP004 Business and organisational change (ensuring governance structures support change) and ACORP005 Working with organisations (partnership working) and ACORP007 Social Risk [Corporate Risk Register](#).

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level: ECSR002 Developing Excellence and Equality [Directorate Risk Registers](#).

## **6 Scheme of Governance**

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section E.1.1.b and E.3.3 of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the statutory functions of the Council under the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010.

**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**

Report prepared by Maxine Booth, Quality Improvement Manager  
Date 11/02/2021

**List of Appendices**  
Appendix 1 - Learning Estates Strategy



**From mountain to sea**

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

**LEARNING ESTATE STRATEGY**

**“Connecting People Places and Learning”**



**Excellence**



**Inclusion**



**Equity**

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## 1 **Aberdeenshire Learning Estate**

Education and Children's Services (ECS) provide a wide range of services to all communities in Aberdeenshire including Education (Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Additional Support Needs) and Children, Young People and Family Services.

In order to provide these services, ECS manages a large number of property assets including schools, community campuses and community facilities.

**The Aberdeenshire Learning Estate incorporates the following:**

### **Education**

Schools  
Early Learning and Child Care buildings (ELCC)  
Community Campus'

### **Children's Services**

Children's homes  
Family centres

### **Live Life Aberdeenshire**

Libraries  
Sports Pitches  
Swimming Pools  
Ski Slopes  
Visitor Attractions

The learning estate needs to be fit for purpose to provide modern public services that meet the current and future needs of our communities.

## 1.1 **National Outcomes**

### **Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning.**

The Scottish Government and COSLA have shown their commitment to invest in the learning estate through their strategy "*Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning*".

The national strategy recognises the importance of the learning estate in supporting outcomes that are necessary for a more successful Scotland.

This vision is for:

**"A learning estate which supports excellence and equity for all":**

The National Learning Estate Strategy is aligned to the education policy aims, set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) of achieving excellence and equity for all children and young people and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The strategy details the specific national outcomes to which it primarily relates:

- We grow up loved, safe and respected
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- We are healthy and active
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered resilient and safe
- We have thriving and innovative businesses with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Our learning estate should support the three key national education and skills priorities:

- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

## 1.2 Ten Guiding Principles

The strategy sets out ten guiding principles as below:

1. Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners
2. Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners
3. The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value
4. The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function
5. Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle
6. Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes and be digitally enabled
7. Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised
8. Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all
9. Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential
10. Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth

The shared vision, aspiration and 10 guiding principles for the Learning Estate form the basis for the strategy within Aberdeenshire.

**Appendix 1** illustrates how changes to the learning estate meets each of the 10 Guiding Principles.

All works are to comply with the Premises Regulations of 1967 however these regulations are currently under review.



## 2 Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

The Act establishes a consultation process in respect of school closures and other major changes that effect schools. The 2010 Act was amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The final part of those amendments, relating to the School Closure Review Panels, came into force on 30 March 2015.

It provides for Scottish Ministers to ‘call in’ a local authority decision, special safeguards for rural schools and sets out a five-stage consultation process, including the preparation of an Educational Benefit Statement.

Scottish Government has provided further guidance for Local Authorities on the Act.

This guidance sets out the requirement to thoroughly prepare before undertaking any consultation exercise. Local Authorities will need to undertake significant preparation, have robust information and ensure any proposal demonstrates educational benefits before consulting on any changes. For example, in the case of rural schools if the reason for a proposal to close a school is a falling roll, the authority should demonstrate what it has done to tackle this within any proposals. The authority must also identify other reasonable alternatives, and full consideration should be given to maintaining the current school. The authority is required to invite representations on these alternatives, as well as requesting suggestions regarding other reasonable alternatives.

The 2010 Act makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools, establishing a procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools. **Appendix 2** details the geographical classification of all Aberdeenshire Schools as adopted by the Scottish Government.

Education Scotland have developed complementary guidance which provides details on the role of HMle.

Another aspect to consider is changing a school status to mothballed:

In considering alternatives to closure, authorities may choose to consider “mothballing” a school (or a stage of education or a nursery class at a school). This is a temporary closure which does not lead to a consultation under the 2010 Act. It is only appropriate in very restricted circumstances. When a school roll falls very low, the authority and/or community may consider that the school is not presently viable but do not wish to close it immediately because there is a reasonable prospect that the number of pupils in the area will increase such that it should be re-opened in the future.

### 2.1 Educational Benefits

The Schools (Consultation) Scotland Act 2010 Act requires that educational benefits should be at the heart of any proposal to make a significant change to schools. It specifies that the local authority must, for all consultations, prepare an Educational Benefits Statement and publish it within the proposal paper. The statement must consider current and future pupils of any affected school, current users of its facilities, and the pupils of other schools in the authority’s area; and also to explain how the authority intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects of the proposal. It is also important to consider the effect upon educational benefit of those schools exceeding 100% capacity.

## 2.2 Capacity Guidance

The Scottish Government have developed guidance on how to determine the capacity for primary schools (this was one of the recommendations from the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education). The aim is to improve consistency and transparency across authorities, improve benchmarking and assist in discussions with housing developers regarding contributions to improve/extend the school estate.

There is now an established planning and working capacity. This work was completed, approved by the ECS Committee and implemented in August 2018.

Secondary school capacity review is ongoing at national level.

## 2.3 Occupancy

The Council must have regard to the occupancy levels of its schools, principally in terms of affordability and Best Value, but also in the context of the ongoing monitoring of occupancy levels by Audit Scotland. An excessively high level of occupancy could very easily lead to over-crowding, whilst an excessively low level is unlikely to be sustainable, affordable or generally to offer Best Value. An ideal occupancy level would be approximately 85%, but a target occupancy band of between 75% and 90% is a reasonable aspiration – across the Council as a whole, across any given Cluster Group of schools, and across any settlement/town.

## 2.4 Out of Zone Placing Requests

Legislation

The Parents' Charter of 1981 gives parents/carers the right to make a Placing Request for the school of their choice other than the school which normally serves the catchment area in which they reside. Aberdeenshire Council has a duty to agree to the Placing Request unless one of the reasons for refusal laid down in law applies. These decisions are made taking a holistic approach against the criteria.

In October 2015, Aberdeenshire Council updated the policy and process for placing requests, so that all decisions are made centrally by the Learning Estates team. This ensures that all factors affecting the capacity of schools are taken into consideration for the decisions.

Pupils who do not attend their zoned school are not entitled to free School Transport, however, they can apply for a privilege pass from the school transport team, although a place is not guaranteed.

## 2.5 School Transport

Travel assistance is provided for primary school pupils who live more than two miles walking distance from their catchment primary school, and for pupils who live more than three miles from their catchment secondary school.

Pupils may also be granted transport if the walk route to their designated school is deemed unsafe and there is no safe travel alternative available.

Parents/carers who apply for and are granted a place in a school which is not their catchment school, must accept full responsibility for transporting pupils to and from school.

Pupils who are not entitled to transport may apply for a privilege pass. These are issued subject to spare seating capacity on dedicated school transport services. Privilege passes can be withdrawn at any time if the seat is required for an entitled pupil or the size of the contracted vehicle is reduced.

Transport is also provided to pupils with additional support needs provided this has been authorised by the appropriate Head of Service based on objective assessment criteria.

## 2.6 Catering

School Catering in Aberdeenshire provides a high quality service to Aberdeenshire's schools and pupils, with an average of upwards of 20,000 meals served daily across the estate. The provision of a catering service throughout Aberdeenshire is challenging, with a wide range of school size and complicated geography to accommodate. As such there are a combination of different facilities available across Aberdeenshire to ensure delivery which is appropriate and timely across the challenging geography.

In Aberdeenshire there are 87 kitchens which can produce and serve meals from scratch. Within this number, there are 24 production kitchens which are set up to produce meals for more than one location. There are 36 serveries in schools which are designed to offer reheat and serve facilities rather than preparing meals from scratch. The food is transported from the designated production kitchen.

The service provided must comply with Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drinks in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008. The provision of a hot school meal is a vital part to the school day as laid out by the Scottish Government in the Education Act and the HPN (Health, Promotion and Nutrition) Act. This is not only important for the health and nutrition for the pupils, but the social aspect of school meals is a fundamental part of the school day. In addition, there are revised Scottish nutritional guidelines due to be implemented from Easter 2021, which will require adaptations and change to deliver the service to pupils.

A review of Aberdeenshire's catering provision is underway to ensure that the service can continue to efficiently meet its obligations and requirements to deliver a high-quality service, fit for the future. This review will cover all aspects of service delivery, including resources, equipment, design brief and staffing.

		Total
Primary	Kitchens	50
	Production Kitchens	24
	Serveries	36
Secondary	Kitchens	13

A production kitchen is a kitchen facility which caters for its own school but also provides meals for other schools/locations.

A servery is a catering provision in a school designed to offer reheat and serve facilities rather than preparing meals from scratch. The food is transported from the designated production kitchen.

## 2.7 Carbon Footprint and Targets

The Scottish Government have set an ambitious target within the Climate Change policy to ensure all buildings in Scotland have net-zero emissions by 2045. Aberdeenshire Council, within its Environmental and Climate Change policy, have set an annual carbon budget figure each year to keep the council on track for its commitment to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 and to be net-zero by 2045.

The Learning Estates Investment Programme contains set targets based on the principles of the Learning Estate Strategy; Connecting People, Places and Learning:

- a) The Condition and Suitability of the building must remain in category A or B for the duration of the lifecycle period.
- b) An energy target of 67kWh/sqm per annum for core operating hours with certain areas excluded.
- c) The facility must be capable of supporting a 1GBps digital service throughout all learning spaces.
- d) Create a minimum number of new jobs, dependent of project capital value, as per the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) published benchmark.

The council will also consider the way in which products are designed and procured to ensure that where practically possible these items can be in use for as long as possible and then re-used, repaired and recycled thus reducing the impact on our environment.

The Eco Schools Programme is an internationally recognised achievement for schools and nurseries committed to Learning for Sustainability. In Aberdeenshire all 172 learning environments are registered with the Eco-Schools programme.

The council continues to develop active travel and school travel programmes to reduce the impact on our environment as well as on other issues such as accessibility, social isolation and physical activity.

## 2.8 Asset Disposal

Asset management will determine the suitability of the asset and identify its requirement for current and future service delivery. Where a detailed review and analysis has taken place on the Learning Estate, the long-term requirement for a particular asset is considered. Assets that are identified as surplus to the needs of the Council are disposed of in accordance with the associated Surplus Property Procedure and any other appropriate legislation that must be considered prior to disposal.

## 2.9 Developer Contribution/Obligations

The Council has been successful in generating contributions to partially offset the cost of new school building (as a result of pupils generated from new housing). However, generally the level of development and the subsequent developer contribution does not cover the full cost of the capital expenditure required.

## 2.10 Digital

This Digital Strategy for Aberdeenshire Education and Children's Service outlines the vision and actions that will be undertaken to embed digital literacy, learning, teaching and assessment practices in our Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Specialist Provision schools.

Our vision in Aberdeenshire is to effectively and appropriately use digital technology to enhance learning and teaching, to equip our children and young people with vital digital literacy skills, alongside literacy and numeracy skills, which will lead to improved educational outcomes and prepare them fully for life beyond school years. We are committed to improving outcomes for all learners.

We know that children and young people are growing up in a world where technology is an intrinsic part of life and as such it is vital that we embed the use of technology in our approaches to learning and teaching and enable children and young people to acquire the relevant skills to ensure they are digitally skilled and digitally literate.

### 3 Business Planning and Revenue Budget

It is important to consider revenue consequences of investment in the school estate. Given the reduction in revenue budget in the medium term, it is essential that the school estate is fit for purpose and any estate enhancement provides value for money.

A holistic long-term approach to improving the estate must be taken using the available analysed information from sources such as school roll forecast trends and Condition and Suitability grades to inform priorities and when planning business investment.

Using a holistic place-based approach will ensure that services can be delivered in an optimum way, making best use of available assets, whilst potentially identifying underperforming and surplus assets.

Investment should not be reactive wherever practically possible and should be targeted within the learning estate, where the data indicates, to help sustain schools. Targeted investment can assist to replace and/or improve dated infrastructure and therefore lead to revenue savings and reduced impact on budgets.

## 4 Aberdeenshire Learning Estate Teams/Groups

### 4.1 Background

The Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate was agreed by Education and Children's Services in October 2018. This has been updated in accordance with the Scotland Learning Estate Strategy.

A Learning Estates Update paper is presented to Education & Children's Services Committee annually. This document sets out the changes to the learning estate and summarises investment priorities for the year ahead.

### 4.2 Learning Estate Team

ECS established the Learning Estates Team to manage the Learning Estate. The team manage budgets for ECS Enhancements, ECS Revenue Improvements and Improved Disabled Access (IDA). The team comprises of:

Quality Improvement Manager  
Learning Estate Team Leader  
Programme Managers  
Learning Estate Officers

The main remit of the team is as follows:

- Appraising the Learning Estate in accordance with the strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning
- Keeping abreast of best practice and incorporate learning into all projects and practices
- Collaborating with the planning service to ensure that the current and future Local Development Plans take into account available school capacity and the ability to adapt the estate
- Identifying facilities which can be adapted to support increased numbers of pupils through housing growth and supporting colleagues to secure appropriate Developer Obligation Contributions
- Assessing capacity of schools and Early Learning and Child Care provision, retaining only a prudent margin for potential roll increases.
- Restricting the use of temporary accommodation to the solution of short-term capacity problems and phasing out the use of existing temporary accommodation as soon as reasonably possible
- Actively managing Out of Zone Placing Requests.
- Leading and coordinating the prioritisation and delivery of projects to enhance and develop the Learning Estate in line with available budgets
- Major capital expenditure will only be taken where it increases capacity at schools which meet the Council's standards or where it brings a school up to the Council's standards, in whole or part.

### 4.3 The Learning Estate Board

The Learning Estate Board is led by the Resources and Performance Head of Service and includes senior officers from both Property and ECS, including HT representatives. The board considers the appropriateness of the estate strategy with respect to the

National position and sets out opportunities to improve and/or rationalise accommodation within the context of significant changes in demographic situations across the Council. This board meets twice per year.

#### 4.4 **ECS Property Prioritisation Group (PPG)**

The Property Prioritisation Group brings together key officers within Education and Children's Services to prioritise construction enhancements to the Learning Estate including the setting of priority themes where appropriate. This group is supported by relevant officers from Property and Facilities Management to offer the appropriate technical advice. The group will consider and agree projects for implementation using available budgets and identifying areas for collaboration to obtain best value. The group meets every 8 weeks to assess priority projects and will receive updates from the ECS Property Projects Operational Group (POG) on project progress. The group has the following remit:

- Align priority setting to the Aberdeenshire Learning Estates Strategy and the National Learning Estates Strategy, Connecting People, Places and Learning.
- Consider and validate projects to be progressed to obtaining Procurement Approval through the submission of a Work Plan to the appropriate committee.
- Where there are competing demands on an available budget the group will discuss and agree the prioritisation of projects using available data and information presented for discussion.
- The group will ensure a collaborative approach amongst services of ECS and with Property and Facilities Management on the delivery of project to obtain best value. The group may also consider a referral to the ECS Senior Management Team maximising the best use of available budgets.
- Receive monitoring updates on budget spend and identify projects that may be progressed should any budget slippage occur.

#### 4.5 **ECS Property Projects Operational Group (POG)**

The POG brings together key officers across Education and Children's Services and Property and Facilities Management. The remit is to work in partnership to deliver property projects funded from a number of ECS budget sources including Revenue Improvements, 1140 Expansion, ECS Enhancements and IDA.

The group meets every 4-6 weeks to identify project risks agreeing appropriate mitigation and issuing necessary actions to ensure efficient and economical delivery of property projects and programmes. The group has the following remit:

- To implement and monitor the delivery of projects, as approved to progress and prioritised by PPG and/or appropriate Budget Holder/s.
- To issue actions to group members to mitigate risks and support project delivery with planned budget/timescales.
- Identification of any strategic or essential projects derived from 'on the ground' intelligence which will require solution and approach agreed by Budget Holders, Chief Officers, ECS Senior Management Team and/or PPG, as appropriate.
- Assessing requirements for any focused staffing support and/or additional staffing support to assist delivery of any project/s e.g. Janitorial/Admin support.



## 5 Aberdeenshire Learning Estate Aspirations and Key Drivers



### Excellence

All learners and community users to be educated in buildings of grade A or B for Condition and Suitability



### Inclusion

All learners and community members to be able to access all accommodation



### Equity

All learners and community members to have access to quality accommodation, meeting the needs of all through a place-based approach

Community engagement, empowerment and partnership are at the heart of the ethos of Education and Children's Services. All establishments within the learning estate should be first and foremost civic and community hubs. The estate should be multifunctional and facilitate not only the delivery of education but support the aspirations of the wider community. Equity and inclusion are at the heart of Aberdeenshire Council ethos, culture and practice; therefore, barriers must not be created due to constraints of the building.

### 5.1 Promoting Excellent Learning Environments

Aberdeenshire are committed to seek opportunities to learn from best practice from across the Northern Alliance, Scotland and beyond. All opportunities to collaborate are welcomed. The Aberdeenshire Primary New Build Brief, the Accessibility brief and the bespoke briefs for community campus' combine all learning and lessons learnt from educational post occupation evaluations.

This informs new builds, extensions, refurbishments and in gaining equity across the older estate.

The following grid shows the fundamental principles behind decision making when designing spaces.

<p>All these aspects are to be considered to ensure a holistic approach to the estate</p>	 <p><b>COMMUNITY</b> Shared learning connecting to local and global communities</p>	 <p><b>SPECIALIST SPACE</b> Practical and creative space for pupils, students and teaching staff</p>
 <p><b>ACCESSIBLE</b> Accessible facilities and appropriate wayfinding with space for the emotional and intellectual needs of learners.</p>	 <p><b>INCLUSIVE</b> Empowered, resilient and safe</p>	 <p><b>PLAY and RECREATION</b> Outdoors and Indoors</p>
 <p><b>NATURAL SPACE</b> Outdoors and Indoors learning for sustainability</p>	 <p><b>OWNERSHIP</b> Demonstrates identity - pupil and student voice</p>	 <p><b>SUSTAINABLE</b> Water and energy efficient, Circular Economy, Recycling Strategy</p>
 <p><b>ENVIRONMENT</b> Wellbeing, acoustics, light, heat, safety, healthy</p>	 <p><b>FIXED FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT</b> opportunity for agile learning, comfort with ergonomic considerations</p>	 <p><b>DIGITAL</b> ICT strategy, infrastructure and equipment</p>

Aberdeenshire promote the use of community campus'; the benefits are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

All learning spaces are designed to be agile, flexible and multifunctional to meet the needs of many users.

An example of this is a learning plaza, which is a multifunctioning learning and teaching space which can be used in a variety of ways by different school and community users.

Technology is integral to the plaza to enable student and teachers to interact seamlessly. Non fixed furniture is crucial to allow various configurations to be created depending on the requirements of users. Plazas should be adjacent to other learning environments to provide breakout opportunities for smaller group work.

Example: Mintlaw Learning Plaza



## 5.2 Suitability and Condition Core Facts

Suitability is a measure of whether a school is fit for the purpose of delivering the education curriculum. The key factors also assess whether a building is 'inclusive' and accessible.

The suitability core facts for schools are fully assessed and analysed annually and reported to the ECS committee. This analysis is used to prioritise works in order to continually improve the estate.

The Condition Core Facts consider the fabric of the school building, the impact of wear and tear on the building and the requirement for repairs or replacement of integral aspects such as windows, roof and heating systems. The condition surveys are carried out on a rolling programme due to the size of the Aberdeenshire estate.

## 5.3 Accessibility

Due to the large and diverse nature of the Aberdeenshire school estate there are schools that will require improvement and updating over time, improving accessibility will be taken into consideration prior to any planned refurbishment works. Schools are identified and prioritised for refurbishment based on:

- Known requirements for existing pupils
- Suitability Core Facts
- Planning for pupils within the cluster

The analysis of the accessibility facts provide Aberdeenshire Council with robust information to ensure that there is a strategic approach to improving accessibility throughout the Learning Estate.

There will be some instances where improvements to a pupil's zoned school is not possible, an accessible alternative will be made available with suitable transport.

New buildings will be accessible to all children and adults including those with a non-physical disability.

All new schools must have the following accommodation:

- Low sensory stimulation area
- Multi-sensory spaces
- The facility to install hoists if required in future
- Accessible toilets which are wide enough to allow two adult assistants with plinth and to be located with pupil toilets
- Shared intervention spaces for nurture and small group working
- Break out spaces adjacent to classrooms
- Sufficient storage space for specialised equipment

Within the existing estate, each academy and one primary school in each network is designated as an Enhanced Provision school as detailed in **Appendix 4** and include the following additional spaces:

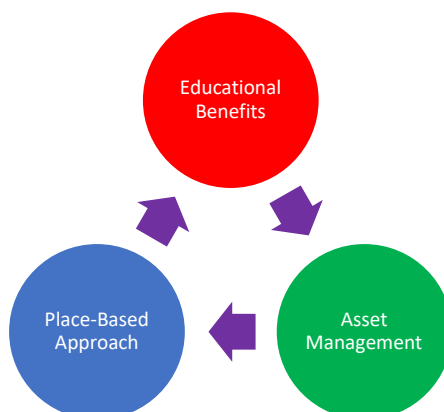
- Multi-sensory Room
- Therapy Room
- Life Skills Room

A community resource hub supports pupils with significant and complex needs that cannot be met within the context of mainstream or enhanced provision.

Details of the accessibility strategy can be found in Appendix 1 - Case Study 1.  
Accessibility

## 6 Aberdeenshire approach

All strategic decisions require to have the following three approaches and practices at the heart:

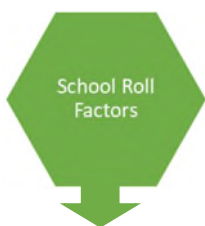


Aberdeenshire adopts a holistic approach focussing on a geographical area/cluster basis encompassing:

- Educational Benefits both to all school communities and to Aberdeenshire as a whole
- The number of primary school places required (including pre-school and services for pupils with additional support needs)
- Community requirements and existing public sector provision
- Asset management review including long term sustainability

In order to assess each area holistically the following aspects are considered:





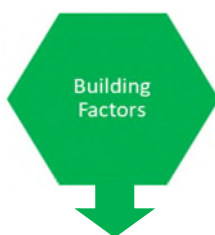
### 6.1 School Roll Factors

- Trends in the school roll over four years and projections
- Assessment of roll against available capacity across each cluster
- Pre-school figures
- Demographics of 0 to 5-year olds
- Quantity of allocated housing in catchment area



### 6.2 Educational Factors

- Involvement of school with the wider community
- Out of zone placement request patterns (in both directions)
- Wider achievement of pupils
- Out of school hours learning
- Viability of support to achieve equality in educational standards
- Opportunities to deliver a modern, flexible curriculum
- Opportunities for pupil choice and flexibility
- Pre-school provision



### 6.3 Building Factors

- Potential of the building to meet Aberdeenshire School Brief
- Health and safety considerations
- Key Performance data in relation to –
  - Condition of school building
  - Accessibility
  - Suitability
  - FM Costs
  - Sufficiency
  - Environmental Factors
  - Revenue implications



#### 6.4 Staffing Arrangement Factors

Within Education and Children's Services arrangements are also in place to review the management and staffing of primary schools, in particular for schools where recruitment and retention of teachers and head teachers is challenging.

The Primary School Management Options was reported to ECS committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This outcome will support educational benefits by strengthening leadership and management within the schools and would provide consistency in approach to learning and teaching and delivery of curriculum. Other benefits include:

- Effective resource sharing across schools in terms of staffing and physical resources.
- Reduced isolation of small school through expansion of collegiate working and sharing of best practice.
- The work of the parent councils can be linked which can enhance the locality approach
- Links provide opportunities for enhanced learning experiences for pupils.
- Opportunity for leadership at whole school level contributes to succession planning.



#### 6.5 Community Planning Factors

The place-based review principles will be adopted to determine current provision of all public sector services in the network and seek to offer a solution by taking a collaborative approach to managing public buildings. It would align asset related initiatives across local public service providers to the best effect for the local community, taking into account the condition and suitability of existing buildings.

For example, if a network was being assessed, there are opportunities within a settlement to relocate services into the school premises. This would reduce the overall capacity of the school and release a council asset improving links between the school and the wider community.

- Location of school - in respect of local community and of other school communities
- Other community facilities in the cluster
- Other public services delivered in the cluster













































