

REPORT TO EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 1 SEPTEMBER 2022

MOTHBALLING OF CLATT SCHOOL

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 To inform members of the decision to mothball Clatt School from August 2022.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Note the mothballing of Clatt School; and

1.2.2 Instruct the Director of Education and Children's Services to provide an update report to the Education and Children's Services Committee in May 2023.

2 Decision Making Route

2.1 Mothballing of schools is an operational decision, that can be made by the Director of Education and Children's Services.

2.2 A decision to temporarily mothball Clatt School from the start of the new term, August 2022, was taken by the Director of Education and Children's Services in March 2022. Mothballing is the temporary closure of a school which does not in itself lead to statutory consultation. This is in accordance with the Scottish Government's statutory guidance contained in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act of 2010. The relevant sections can be found at **Appendix 1**, the full guidance can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477028.pdf>

3 Discussion

3.1 The Huntly Cluster consists of the following primary schools: Cairney, Clatt, Drumblade, Fergie, Gartly (currently mothballed), Glass, Gordon Primary, Inch, Kennethmont, Largon, Premnay and Rhyndale. Each of these schools are within the catchment area for The Gordon Schools for the provision of secondary education. Pupils residing within the Inch and Premnay catchment areas have the option to attend either The Gordon Schools or Inverurie Academy for the provision of secondary education.

3.2 A statutory consultation in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is currently being undertaken to close Gartly School.

3.3 Clatt School has a capacity for 50 pupils. Under Scottish Government guidelines, it is classed as a remote rural school (areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more).

- 3.4 Officers have closely monitored the school roll at Clatt School for a number of years. On 7 February 2022 the roll at Clatt School was 6 pupils. The roll is not forecast to increase in future years. Schools with rolls this low prompt an assessment regarding the viability of the school and the educational benefits for the remaining pupils.
- 3.5 The school roll forecast as shown in Table 1 below does not show an increase at the school within the next four years.

Table 1

Clatt School	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Roll	5	5	4	5

- 3.6 On 20 April 2022 officers met with Ward members to discuss the possible options for the school.
- 3.7 Meetings were held with staff and parents/carers of Clatt School on 21 April 2022 to inform them of the intention to mothball the school. At this point information was shared regarding the relocation of staff and also which schools would be made available to pupils with transport provided.
- 3.8 Pupils previously enrolled at Clatt School were offered a place at either Kennethmont School, Rhynie School, or Premnay School. Should mothballing continue, younger siblings who have yet to start school, will also be guaranteed a place at the school of choice, they will also be provided transport to one of the designated schools.
- 3.9 Any pupils who reside within the Clatt School catchment area and choose to attend Premnay School will remain within the catchment for The Gordon Schools. Should they wish to attend Inverurie Academy they will be required to submit a placing request.
- 3.10 Individual meetings with each parent/carer were organised by the Head Teacher in April 2022, to discuss individual circumstances and to give support to each family.
- 3.11 All pupils have now enrolled in an alternative school and officers will be keeping in touch with the families to ensure that they have settled in well. All staff have been assisted with alternative arrangements.
- 3.12 The situation is being monitored by officers, and an update will be provided when appropriate. This will need to take into account any in-zone applications during the year due to families moving into catchment and those received for P1 pupils in early 2023.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 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 ensuring better, integrated working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people.

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

4.2 This report helps deliver against: Scotland’s Learning Estate Strategy Connecting People, Places and Learning and Aberdeenshire Council’s Learning Estates and Accessibility Strategies.

4.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

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

4.4 This is an update paper, and no decisions are to be made by the Committee, there are no implications from the recommendations.

4.5 The screening section as part of Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment process has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken. The recommendations in this report do not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

4.6 The following Risk have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: (ACORP007 Social risk (demographic change)). [Corporate Risk Register](#).

4.7 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level; ECSR002 To secure continuous improvement in outcomes for children and young people [ECS Directorate Risks Register](#). The Council needs to be assured that the estate will deliver an inclusive and positive environment for learning, working and engagement.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level; ECSR003 To have improved business support and resource

management arrangements in place across ECS [ECS Directorate Risks Register](#). The Council needs to be assured the estate matches demand.

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officers 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.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section 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 including those relating to approval of Proposals, and the requirement for authorities to conduct a pre-consultation in relation to potential rural school closures and in terms of Section E3.4 as it relates to overseeing the functions of the Council under the Education (Scotland) Acts and all other relevant legislation and regulations.

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Director of Education & Children's Services

Report prepared by Maxine Booth, Quality Improvement Manager Learning Estates
Date 27 July 2022

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statutory Guidance
Mothballing

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Mothballing

63. 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.
64. It is vital that this flexibility to close a school for a temporary period is not used to undermine the requirements under the 2010 Act to consult on all school closure proposals. Mothballing is only appropriate for a temporary period and should be subject to regular review, at least annually, against the same requirements which led to the original decision to mothball the school (or stage of education). The maximum length of its duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed 3 years in areas that are not very remote. The condition of the school building and cost of maintaining the mothballed provision will also be relevant.
65. A school can be mothballed where the school roll has fallen to zero and continues to be zero. It may also be appropriate where the roll or potential roll is very low and the authority considers the only other option to be closure. However, in circumstances where a school is mothballed rather than closed and some children and young people remain in the catchment area, this decision should be taken in consultation with the parents involved, and the possibility should be raised as early as possible, in order to ensure that families can understand the options open to them. Mothballing should not be a way of denying parents access to the statutory consultation process required under the 2010 Act and if the majority of parents oppose mothballing, it would be appropriate to move to statutory consultation on closure as soon as possible.