

**Stirling Council**  
**Schools, Learning and Education**  
**Buchanan Primary School**  
**Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Proposal**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 Buchanan Primary School was mothballed in sessions 2017/18 (from January 2018), 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 following decision at Stirling Council Children and Young People Committee. During the period of mothballing, the catchment area of Drymen Primary School was extended to include the area covered by Buchanan Primary School and most children living in the Buchanan catchment area currently attend Drymen Primary School.

1.2 In line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, this paper proposes a formal consultation be undertaken to consider that:

- Education provision at Buchanan Primary School be permanently discontinued with effect from 24 June 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- Pupils of Buchanan Primary School catchment area permanently receive their education at Drymen Primary School, from 25 June 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- The delineated catchment area of Drymen Primary School be permanently extended to include the delineated catchment area of Buchanan Primary School from 25 June 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

**2. Reasons for Formulating the Proposal**

2.1 Prior to mothballing, Buchanan Primary School operated as a single teacher primary school serving the village of Milton of Buchanan and the surrounding area. The capacity of Buchanan Primary school is 75 pupils. Buchanan Primary School is an associated primary school for Balfron High School.

2.2 Prior to mothballing, the roll at Buchanan Primary School had fallen steadily over the past 5 school sessions.

School Roll by Year (at September Census)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
School Roll	22	20	14	8	5

2.3 At the start of the 2017/18 session, there were 5 children enrolled at Buchanan Primary School. Between August and October 2017, placing requests for all 5 children were submitted and accepted for Drymen Primary School.

- 2.4 For session 2018/19, there were 7 children for Primary 1 enrolment who lived in the Buchanan Primary School catchment area. These 7 children enrolled for P1 at Drymen Primary School.
- 2.5 For session 2019/20, there were 4 children for Primary 1 who lived in the Buchanan Primary School catchment area. Three children enrolled at Drymen Primary School. One submitted a placing request to attend another local school.
- 2.6 For session 2020/21, there were 4 children for Primary 1 who lived in the Buchanan catchment area. Two of these children enrolled at Drymen Primary School. Two submitted placing requests to attend other schools.
- 2.7 For session 2021/22, there were 8 children for Primary 1 who lived in the Buchanan catchment area. Six of these children enrolled at Drymen Primary School. Two submitted placing requests to other schools.
- 2.8 There have been no parents/carers living within the Buchanan Primary School catchment area who have expressed an interest to enrol any pupils in Buchanan Primary School during the period of mothballing.
- 2.9 Currently in Drymen Primary School, there are 29 children from the Buchanan catchment area out of a roll of 109 in the school. The number of children from Buchanan are spread across Primary 1 to Primary 7. All of the children are settled at Drymen Primary School.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Drymen PS 2021/22	6	3	3	7	1	5	4

- 2.10 Future pupil projections for the Buchanan Primary School catchment (using data provided by Forth Valley NHS in September 2020) indicate that the following P1 intakes are expected:

	2022	2023	2024
P1 Pupils expected	4	4	3

These circumstances result in the unlikely prospect of an increased pupil population for Buchanan Primary School.

- 2.11 Information from the Housing Land Audit (HLA) indicates that there is a small housing development of 20 houses planned for Balmaha with a proposed building start date of 2022 which predicts 6.2 pupils to be generated in year 1 and 0.62 in year 2. This planned housing development is in the Buchanan catchment area.

When Croftamie Primary School closed in 1997, the families living in that catchment area had a choice as to whether they wanted their children to attend Buchanan Primary School or Drymen Primary School. There are currently 2 small housing developments planned for the former Croftamie catchment area. One has a total of 6 houses planned with 1.86 pupils generated in year 1 and 1.86 pupils generated in year 2. The other has 14 houses planned with 4.34 pupils generated in year 1 and 0 pupils generated in year 2. There is currently no information on a proposed start date for these 2 small housing developments.

### **3 Most Appropriate Response to Reasons for Proposal**

- 3.1 Drymen Primary School is proposed as the catchment area school for pupils resident in Buchanan Primary School catchment. Drymen Primary School is 2.5 miles by road from Buchanan Primary School. This provides a local primary school within reasonable travelling distance of the Buchanan community.
- 3.2 The roll (P1 - P7) of Drymen Primary School is 116 (as of August 2021). The school has a build capacity of 150 and an optimum capacity of 131.
- 3.3 There are planned housing developments within the Drymen catchment area which are currently delayed. The roll projections for Drymen Primary School will be kept under review to monitor the impact of any further changes in the number of completions/timing of the planned developments. Pupils from the Buchanan Primary School catchment area are included any roll projections.
- 3.4 Croftamie Nursery is to be relocated to Drymen Primary School from August 2022 and will form part of Drymen Primary School and Nursery Class. This will have a capacity of 37 children.

### **4 Likely Impact on Buchanan Community**

- 4.1 Prior to mothballing of Buchanan Primary School, some families living within the catchment already chose for their children to attend larger schools locally, mainly Drymen Primary School, due to wanting opportunities for wider social interaction and opportunities for group work with peers. Drymen Primary school is approximately 2.5 miles from Buchanan Primary School. Two other local primary schools, Killearn Primary School and Balfron Primary School are also within travelling distance at 7.7 miles and 7.5 miles respectively. Thus should parents/carers wish to place their child at another local school, choices are available. It is therefore unlikely that closure of the school will encourage families with school-age children to leave the community or discourage young families from moving to the community.
- 4.2 In recent years until January 2018, Buchanan Primary School building has only been used for the purpose of educating primary school aged children during school hours. Milton of Buchanan has a Memorial Hall used for public meetings, local events, fetes, surgeries and recreational activities.

### **5 Travel Plan for Pupils**

- 5.1 Currently children who live within the Buchanan Primary School catchment area and who are distance entitled to transport are transported by a combination of methods to Drymen Primary School. Some pupils have been awarded parental mileage contracts, whilst others are transported on a minibus or taxi. Currently 8 pupils use the school minibus; 3 pupils use the school taxi and 5 families (7 children) make use of the parental mileage contract. If the proposal is accepted, this arrangement would continue as pupils resident in the Buchanan Primary School catchment area would be distance entitled to transport, if they live more than two miles from their zoned school by the shortest available route (School Transport Policy, March 2020).
- 5.2 Currently 18 young people living in the Buchanan Primary School catchment area are transported to Balfron High School by bus due to distance entitlement. If the proposal is accepted, there would be no change to this provision.
- 5.3 Drymen Primary School has a School Travel Plan which encourages active, safe and sustainable travel to and from school. The Travel Plan group is comprised of school staff

and pupils. Partners involved in the planning included parents/carers and local residents of the school and the Drymen Community Development Trust.

## **6 Future Use of Buchanan Primary School Building**

- 6.1 Buchanan Primary School is located in Milton of Buchanan. The school building is single storey and was originally constructed in 1965, with a later extension in 1995.
- 6.2 There have been no particular concerns about the school building since it was mothballed in January 2018. In August 2018, Buchanan Primary School was assessed under the new Core Fact assessment criteria and from a condition perspective has been rated at 75% and a B rated property with approximately £67,500 of investment required over the next 5 years. A new suitability assessment was not carried out due to being mothballed, however the last recorded suitability assessment was carried out on 31 October 2014 and was rated as 90% resulting in an A rated building. The building is checked regularly and has not deteriorated in this period. If the school was to be re-opened, some decoration work would be required.
- 6.3 If the proposal is accepted and the school closed permanently, Stirling Council Infrastructure Delivery Team would assume responsibility for the building.
- 6.4 The property will become surplus to the Council's operational requirements and prepared to be marketed. All options will be considered for the future use of the property to support the village in terms of both housing and non-housing options. Options regarding the use of funds from any potential sale of the building will be considered.

## **7 Drymen Primary School Building**

- 7.1 As reported to the Children and Young People Committee on 26 November 2019, Drymen Primary School has been assessed under the new Core Fact assessment criteria and from a condition perspective has been rated at 72% and a B rated property with approximately £77,250 of investment required over the next 5 years. The suitability assessment rates the building as 92% and at an A rating.
- 7.2 The Children and Young People Committee were asked to support the feasibility work through an option appraisal and a strategic business case to be undertaken to look at solutions for the future development of the school.

## **8 Financial Information**

- 8.1 The costs for a full financial year, based on 2018/19 figures, if Buchanan Primary School were to re-open would be £142,767. The additional costs for a full financial year, based on 2018/19 figures, for Drymen Primary School are £51,795. Thus the annual recurring savings, based on 2018/19 figures, would be £90 972.
- 8.2 There is also an additional reduction in revenue for session 2018/19 of £16,185 from Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocated to small schools. GAE funding contributes to overall local authority revenue relative to that of the other Scottish local authorities and may vary annually. Any decrease in numbers of pupils in small rural schools does not therefore necessarily decrease the total GAE allocated to Stirling Council.

## **9. Rural School Status - The Case for Closure and Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives**

- 9.1 Buchanan Primary School is classified as an accessible rural school according to criteria applied by the Scottish Government.

9.2 The Schools (Consultation) Scotland Act 2010 states that local authorities must identify the reasons for formulating the proposal. The proposal for closure was formulated for the following reasons:

- Buchanan Primary School has been mothballed since January 2018.
- In October 2017, the Education Service was advised that, due to a number of pupil movements out of Buchanan Primary School, there were at that time 0 pupils attending the school. The five remaining children had enrolled at Drymen Primary School in October 2017.
- The school roll for Buchanan Primary School had steadily declined since 2013. The current maximum capacity of the school is 75 pupils. The school roll, at the Census in September 2017, was 5 pupils, giving an occupancy level of 6%.
- The Education Service have monitored the school roll and reviewed the number of nursery pupils eligible to commence P1 in August 2018 and each session thereafter. No parents/carers of nursery pupils enquired about a place for Primary 1 in Buchanan Primary School.
- There is currently no indication in the Housing Land Audit to suggest that new housing development within the local area would allow the school to have a sustainable school roll.
- The Education Service has reviewed the local primary school in close proximity to Buchanan Primary School which is Drymen Primary School. Drymen Primary School has space for the number of pupils projected from within the existing catchment area of Buchanan Primary School. The schools have had Shared Headship since 2011 and the children from Buchanan Primary School participated regularly in shared events with Drymen Primary School from 2011 until the remaining pupils left in October 2017.

9.3 The Education Service is also required to consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal.

#### 9.4 Continued Mothballing of Buchanan Primary School

By August 2021, Buchanan Primary School will have been mothballed for three and a half years. This exceeds the maximum length of time recommended in the Scottish Government guidance to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010:

*'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.'* (Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Statutory Guidance, page 17)

(Note that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, planned consultation during session 2020/21 on the future of Buchanan Primary School was not progressed. This is the reason the mothballing of the school has exceeded 3 years.)

9.5 To retain a building, which is empty and not in operation, for another year, would require Stirling Council to continue to ensure security, undertake repairs and sustain maintenance contracts. An empty building within a community is not ideal for the Milton of Buchanan residents and is causing concern as reported during the informal consultation period with community groups. Where there are no anticipated enrolments of pupils, continued mothballing of the school is not justified.

## **9.6 Buchanan Primary School could be Re-opened**

The school would have a very small roll, with roll projections remaining static or decreasing. No parents/carers have indicated at P1 enrolment or Nursery/P1 Induction meetings that they were interested in the school re-opening. Buchanan Primary School would continue to have a Shared Headship with Drymen Primary School. Thus the school reopening is not considered a reasonable alternative at this time or in the future. Views will be sought and taken into consideration during the formal consultation period.

## **10 Educational Benefits Statement**

- 10.1 This Educational Benefits Statement considers the educational benefits for pupils to attend Drymen Primary School, which would be designated as the catchment school, should the proposal be implemented. By highlighting the educational benefits of Drymen Primary School, it is not implied that many of these benefits did not already exist in Buchanan Primary School. The benefits are being considered when looking at the proposal in terms of what would be provided in the rezoned school of Drymen Primary School.
- 10.2 Drymen Primary School provides a broad and rich curriculum which is firmly grounded in the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Children experience high quality learning across all curriculum areas and subjects. Contexts for learning are motivating and relevant to children and are explored through learning experiences which are challenging and enjoyable.
- 10.3 Drymen Primary School's vision, "We Care for Each Other; We Care for Ourselves; We Care for our Environment" encapsulates the school's aims for children and families to work in partnership in a nurturing environment with an emphasis on the child as an individual and sustainability. The school values of Kindness, Teamwork and Respect were recently created with the school community and underpin the school ethos.
- 10.4 At Drymen Primary School, children benefit from a wide range of opportunities for wider achievement. In the last year, this has included participation in the school's Community Leadership Groups which contribute to the Eco Schools Award. There are opportunities for sporting achievement with Active Stirling which led to the school's Gold Sports Award. In addition, pupils benefited from a Health Week and a literacy-focused week on Reading, including an author visit to open the school's newly developed library. Two Gold and a Bronze award were presented to P7 children last year as part of the Scottish Mathematics Challenge.
- 10.5 Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are central aspects of all learning at Drymen Primary School. There are robust systems in place for tracking and monitoring children's progress in learning. Most pupils achieve appropriate levels or above in literacy and numeracy. This is broadly in line with local and national levels.
- 10.6 There are very good opportunities for learning languages. All children have regular opportunities to learn French through a whole school progressive approach to languages learning from Primary 1 to Primary 7. Spanish is being introduced as a third language from Primary 5. Makaton is led by the Makaton Leaders in P1 and P2 and weekly signs are introduced at assembly.
- 10.7 There is good access to a range of technologies including iPads and laptops to support and enhance learning for pupils at Drymen Primary School. Plans are underway to purchase more digital resources for the school and a plan is underway to develop a Technology Hub in the current ICT suite to promote creativity and learning through play using STEM resources.

- 10.8 Learning experiences are differentiated to meet the pupils' needs and pupils benefit from being able to work on co-operative learning tasks with others. The Headteacher and Principal Teacher meet regularly to discuss the children's progress and a range of interventions are planned to provide additional support. These are monitored and outcomes discussed with families.
- 10.9 Drymen Primary School has a Support for Learning Teacher for half a day each week. This assists in meeting the needs of all pupils, including those with Additional Support Needs. Children with similar needs may work together in groups and benefit from short term support or targeted interventions. This year, the school's pupil equity fund (PEF) allocation is funding a teacher for an extra day, providing support for individuals in writing and outdoor learning wellbeing groups.
- 10.10 At Drymen Primary School, there are pupils of all age groups within the school which allows pupils the opportunity to work in pairs, groups, at peer level and across stages in the school and in mixed groups. It also allows the sharing of ideas, peer support, informal mentoring and relationship building, all of which contribute to the whole school experience for all pupils. This provides opportunities to develop skills for life, learning and work, including leadership, co-operation, and problem-solving skills.
- 10.11 Every teacher at Drymen Primary is involved in leadership of change through involvement in school improvement groups, leading a specific aspect of school improvement. This demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement and a strong sense of teamwork at the school.
- 10.12 Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop skills in team games and sports during physical education, physical activity and sport lessons at Drymen Primary School. The school grounds include a playing field, a wooded area and an enclosed playground space. These provide a wide range of opportunities for the pupils to experience a range of team and individual sports. Pupils have represented their school and community in a range of events including lacrosse, Scottish dancing, cross country and Stirling's Track and Field event. Young Sports Leaders from Balfour High School regularly support Drymen Primary pupils in developing sports skills.
- 10.13 Outdoor learning at Drymen Primary School is an important strength; children are provided with wide and varied opportunities to learn outdoors. Older classes have benefitted from partnership working with the Rangers from the National Park. Staff have recently benefitted from outdoor learning professional learning in numeracy and maths. This led to the purchase of additional outdoor learning resources. Established links are in place with Drymen's local library and Drymen Parish Church and this provides enriching opportunities and experiences for the curriculum.
- 10.14 Pupils attending Drymen Primary School have increased opportunities for social interaction as a result of attending a larger school. All pupils have opportunities to interact and socialise with groups of children their own age both in the classroom environment and during break and lunch times and before and after school. The benefit to pupils is that they are given opportunities to widen their social circle, allowing them to foster positive peer relationships.
- 10.15 All pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to be involved in improving their school at Drymen Primary School, such as being in a Community Leadership Group, which focus on improving the environment and their community. This has included contribution to community events including road-safety awareness. The school has been recognised for its eco-work involving children and the local community, recently being awarded their sixth Eco Schools Scotland Green Flag. There are opportunities for children to plant trees and bulbs in the school grounds.

- 10.16 The leadership team at Drymen Primary School is made up of the Headteacher, Principal Teacher and an Acting Principal Teacher for session 2020/21. The Headteacher has recently completed an additional leadership qualification. The Principal Teacher has been part of a Stirling-wide development group on play in early years. This year, the Acting Principal Teacher is completing a middle leadership qualification. The school is part of a School Improvement Partnership, working with two other Stirling schools to promote effective self-evaluation for school improvement. The school has a well-planned and committed approach to continuous improvement.
- 10.17 In a larger school, there are more regular opportunities for staff to review and improve practice as a school, including linking with partner services and other schools in the wider learning community. Access to peer support and development allows staff to engage in professional learning opportunities more readily, sharing ideas and experiences, and supporting delivery of high-quality teaching and learning. Recently, Drymen Primary School teaching and support staff broadened their understanding of nurture approaches and positive behaviour through attending professional learning with all schools in the Balfron Learning Community. Teachers also shared assessments and planning in Listening and Talking with colleagues in Balfron Primary school to share and raise standards in literacy.
- 10.18 At Drymen Primary School parents play a key role in the leadership and ethos of the school. The school has an active Parent Council who play a key role in school improvement planning. This has included purchasing numeracy and maths resources and funding extra-curricular excursions for all pupils. The Parent Council organise a range of social and fundraising events to support the school.
- 10.19 Parents are welcomed into school and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, including attendance at pupil-led events, for example science afternoons and assemblies. The school uses Twitter and short videos to engage with families to give them a snapshot of life in the school and the children's achievements. The positive relationships fostered with parents by the school allows them to further support their children in their learning at school.
- 10.20 There have been a range of activities run by parents and staff after school and at lunchtimes, including football, book club, choir and cross country. This provides the pupils opportunities to develop their interests and talents as well as building on school relationships by continued interaction with their peers across a range of ages and stages. The benefits of healthy activities and sports have an impact on the pupils' health and wellbeing, which in turn improves their readiness to learn.
- 10.21 Drymen Primary School benefits from effective transition arrangements with Croftamie Nursery, including the Principal Teacher visiting fortnightly from October to begin working with the children. Plans to relocate Croftamie Nursery to Drymen Primary will further enhance these processes. Transition from P7 to secondary school is supported by the larger number of pupils in Drymen Primary School, offering peer support and friendship groups. Drymen Primary involve staff from Balfron High School in review meetings for children with additional support needs to ensure smooth transition to secondary school.
- 10.22 Thus there are a wide range of educational benefits for pupils resident in Buchanan Primary School catchment area if they are to attend Drymen Primary School. All areas of their development including learning, social, emotional and physical can be enhanced by being part of a larger school. Drymen Primary school is able to provide a broad, relevant and engaging curriculum with a wealth of experiences which will help children to be prepared for life, learning and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.