



## **Proposal Document**

### **Closure of Crossroads Primary School**

Consultation open 23 September 2024 to 15 November 2024

**MORAY COUNCIL IS PROPOSING, SUBJECT TO THE OUTCOME OF THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION PROCESS:**

- **To discontinue education at Crossroads Primary School, which is currently mothballed and re-assign its catchment area in whole to Ketih Primary School split between Keith Primary School and Rothiemay Primary School**
- **The proposal would apply to the primary school stages (P1-P7) of education in Crossroads catchment, as there is no pre-school education provided at the school.**
- **The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school**

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

The schools affected by this proposal are:

- Crossroads Primary School
- Keith Primary School
- Rothiemay Primary School
- Newmill Primary School
- St Thomas's RC Primary School

## DISTRIBUTION

A copy of this document is available on the Moray Council website: [Crossroads Primary School - Moray Council](#) or by emailing [learningestate@moray.gov.uk](mailto:learningestate@moray.gov.uk)

This document will be made available to:

- Parent Councils of the schools listed above
- Parents of the pupils at the schools listed above
- Pupils at the schools listed above
- Parents of pre-school age children living within the Crossroads catchment
- Staff at the schools listed above
- Trade union representatives of the above staff
- Strathisla Community Council
- Keith Community Council
- Education Scotland
- Crossroads catchment residents

Read copies of this document is also available at:

- Keith Library
- Keith Primary School
- Rothiemay Primary School
- Newmill Primary School
- Keith Nursery
- King Memorial Hall
- Keith Community Centre
- St Thomas's RC Primary School
- Elgin Central Library

## **1. Legislative Background**

- 1.1. The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (S.3 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- 1.2. Crossroads Primary School is classed as remote rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Council has had regard to the provisions of that Act, in particular the heightened consideration to be given to rural school closures. In terms of that Act, S7 requires a public meeting to be held as part of the consultation process.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. Moray Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all of its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all of the pupils in its schools.
- 2.2. This proposal document is focussed upon Crossroads Primary School, located within Strathisla area of Moray, and part of the Keith Associated School Group.
- 2.3. This proposal document contains several maps. PDF copies of all maps will be available on the Moray Council website at the address given on page 36 of this document. Printed copies of the maps will also be available on request in each of the schools affected by the consultation and at Keith Library.

It is planned that the first will be with current and future parents/carers on 21 October 2024, and the second for the wider community on 22 October 2024. The exact timings and locations for these meetings will be agreed with relevant stakeholders following a Committee decision to proceed with the consultation process. An optional online meeting will be held on 23 October 2024 at 7pm if requested by any stakeholders.

- 2.4. The consultation process for this proposal is set out in detail in Section 17 of this document.

## **3. Reason for Proposal**

- 3.1. This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:
  - No children have attended Crossroads Primary School since January 2023 when the school was mothballed. The decision to mothball was taken as

the pupil numbers had fallen to 4 at the start of the 2022/23 academic session.

- There were 4 children within the Crossroads catchment that could have enrolled for P1 in August 2023 but only 1 request was made.
- Although the number of primary school children in the Crossroads Primary School catchment totals 25 for the 2023/24 session families have chosen to send their children to the following settings:
  - Keith Primary – 15 (of whom 2 are following the proposal to mothball Crossroads)
  - St Thomas RC Primary – 3
  - Rothiemay Primary 7 (of whom 3 are following the proposal to mothball Crossroads)
- A further 4 pupils were in the catchment area for Crossroads and due to start Primary 1 in August 2024 but all chose to make placing requests to Keith – 3 to Keith Primary School and 1 to St Thomas RC Primary School.
- A school roll of fewer than 15 pupils provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence.
- A school roll of fewer than 15 pupils hampers social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age.
- The Council has explored alternatives in arriving at this proposal, explained further below.
- The current condition of Crossroads Primary School is category C (Poor) overall, with significant areas at Category D (Bad).

3.2. The current proposal follows informal discussions between Moray Council officials; local elected members, and community members. Informal meetings with the community were held as follows:

- Parent Meeting re future roll, Crossroads Primary School - 21 April 2022
- Staff Meeting re future roll, Crossroads Primary School - 21 April 2022
- Community Session re Mothballing, Crossroads Primary School - 10 May 2023 (online)
- Community Session re Mothballing, Crossroads Primary School - 11 May 2023
- Parent Meeting re future roll, Crossroads Primary School - 23 May 2023
- Parent/Community Feedback Form - April & May 2023
- Community Session re Mothballing, Crossroads Primary School – 27 November 2023
- Parent Session re Mothballing, Crossroads Primary School – 21 November 2023

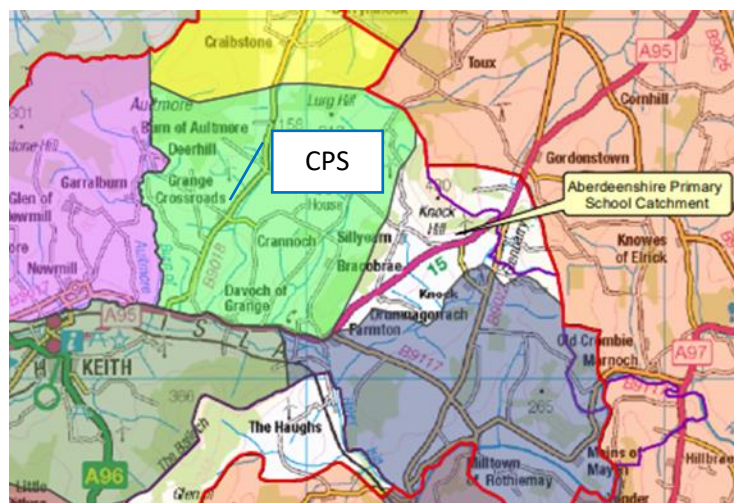
- 3.3. Letters were sent on 23 April 2023 to every property within the catchment area to inform residents of the meetings and alternate contact options if they were unable to attend.
- 3.4. In addition to the engagement session's comments boxes were made available in locations around the Crossroads catchment, and an online comments page was open on the Moray Council website during April and May 2023 to gather views from all residents and people could telephone or email the Learning Estate team.
- 3.5. Despite a small uptake in numbers, these sessions proved useful, and a number of suggestions were made over the course of the sessions for potential use of the school building in the event of closure.

#### **4. Examination of Alternatives**

- 4.1. In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure. The alternatives to closure would be:
  - to re-open Crossroads Primary School with its current catchment area or;
  - to modify the catchment area to achieve a sustainable roll or;
  - to continue with the current "mothballing" arrangement.
- 4.2. During the community engagement sessions, officers sought suggestions of alternatives to closure, the suggestions included:
  - Community Asset Transfer to the Community to use
  - Provide the building for local charity use space for activities
  - Development for residential property
- 4.3. As none of them involve the building operating as a primary school for local pupils, they would not be a viable alternative to closure.
- 4.4. In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required of the most appropriate way to re-zone the school catchment area. Further discussion of this is included in Section 7 of this report.
- 4.5. The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and the Options Appraisal.

#### **5. Crossroads Primary School**

- 5.1. During the build up to the closing months of the 2022/23 session it was noted that a number of children on the school roll were electing to move to Keith Primary, St Thomas RC Primary and Rothiemay Primary Schools.
- 5.2. In August 2022, only 5 children were attending the school from the start of the new session, the Education Service was left with no alternative but to take the decision to mothball Crossroads. The families of the 5 remaining children were involved in discussion about alternative provisions, with 2 electing to send their children to Keith Primary, 3 to Rothiemay Primary. The school was formally mothballed on 9th January 2023 following the agreement by Moray Council's Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee, on 28 September 2022, to mothball Crossroads Primary School.
- 5.3. The Keith Associated School group consists of 6 primary schools, Keith, St Thomas, Rothiemay, Newmill, Botriphnie and the currently mothballed Crossroads. Each of these schools is in the catchment for Keith Grammar School in Keith. For historical reasons, the Keith Grammar School catchment also includes portions of Ordiquhill and Cairnie Primary catchments – both schools being in the neighbouring local authority area.
- 5.4. Crossroads Primary School was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The school is non-denominational and serves the dispersed community of Grange, it is located 4 miles North West of Keith on an elevated site within the wider area of Strathisla.
- 5.5. Crossroads Primary School catchment is bordered by Keith, Newmill, Rothiemay and Cullen Primary schools within the Moray Learning Estate. It is also bordered to the East by Ordiquhill Primary School in the Aberdeenshire Council area. Map 2 below shows the catchment area for Crossroads Primary School and the neighbouring schools.



Map 1 – Map showing the catchment area for Crossroads Primary School (Light Green) with the boundaries of neighbouring schools. The Keith Grammar School catchment is in red.

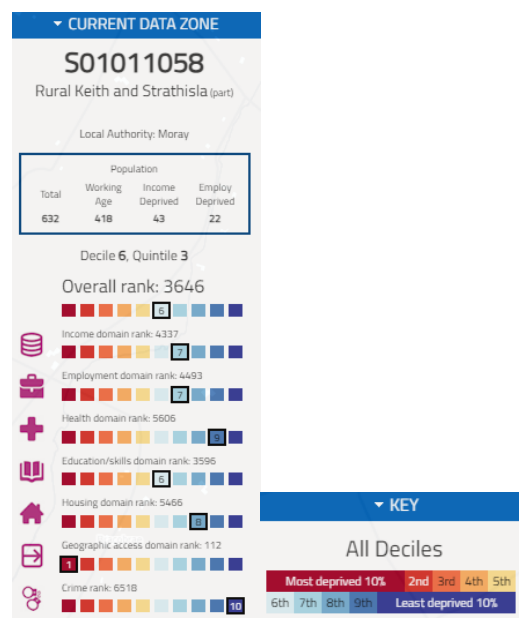
Distances between Crossroads Primary School (CPS) and surrounding schools sourced from Google Maps are listed below:

- Newmill Primary School - 3.9 miles
- Keith Primary School - 4.1 miles
- Ordiqihill primary School (Aberdeenshire) - 7.4 miles
- Rothiemay Primary School - 7.6 miles
- Cullen Primary School - 8.6 miles

In addition, the distance to the Keith Grammar School, is 4.0 miles.

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 Crossroads data zone (Rural Keith and Strathisla) is ranked at 3646. Within this ranking geographical access is the biggest level of deprivation, followed by Education/Skills. Housing is relatively good while Crime and Health are ranked as the least deprived. A tabular breakdown of this information is below.

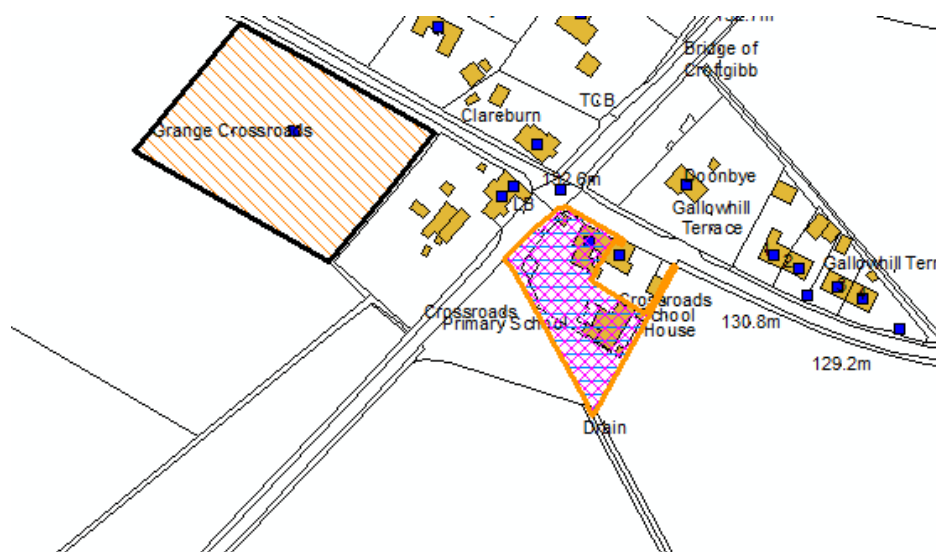
Table 2. SIMD 2020 Ranking – Rural Keith and Strathisla



- 5.6. As mentioned in 1.2 under the Scottish Government Guidelines Crossroads Primary School is classed as a remote rural school – that is it serves a population of less than 3,000 and is more than 30 minutes’ drive from a settlement of 10,000 or more.
- 5.7. The school comprise two buildings, a primary school and separate dining and games hall both constructed in single storey blocks with various additions and outbuildings. There is a small tarmac playground and car-park area and the site is adjacent to a small area of amenity woodland which is accessible via public access rights. Historically the school has had access to an area of ground across the main road as a playing field via an informal agreement with Grange Community Association. It appears that this Association may no longer be in operation as was, and there were concerns about the maintenance and



insurance for this area. This area has returned to agricultural use, being used by a local farmer. The original school building, now the dining/games hall was constructed around 1880 and the newer school building was constructed around 1980. The school is nondenominational and serves properties within the rural area of Grange. It is located by the B9018 approximately 2 miles North East of the A95 junction at Grange Crossroads, 4 miles from Keith (measured to Keith Grammar and Primary Schools). Crossroads Primary School has a physical capacity of 63 pupil (planning capacity of 50). It has 2 single storey buildings with 2 classrooms, kitchen, hall, staff room. The hall doubles as both a dining room and indoor PE area. A map of the school ground and its surrounding amenities is shown in Map 2 below with the school boundaries in orange.



**Map 2 – Crossroads Primary School**

- 5.8. Crossroads Primary School delivered primary education from P1 to P7. There was no nursery on site and local children often attended nursery at other nearby schools. There are currently six nursery-age pupils attending nursery in Keith, one in Newmill. The school has a kitchen which served meals that were prepared at Keith Primary School and delivered to Crossroads Primary School on a daily basis. The school did not operate a breakfast club or after school club outwith school hours. There were no outside school lets or community use of the buildings or grounds outwith the normal working of the school.
- 5.9. When the school was last in operation, it was managed with a paired head teacher arrangement with Rothiemay Primary School. If the school were to re-open with one class, the staffing entitlements (Full Time Equivalent (FTE)) could be as follows:
- Head Teacher - 0.5 FTE

- Principal Teacher - 1 FTE
- McCrone support - 0.12 FTE
- Pupil Support Assistant - 25 hours
- Senior Catering Assistant -10 hours
- Playground assistance - 7 hours
- Lunchtime supervisor – 7.5hours

This would be dependent upon actual school roll and in line with the Moray Devolved School Management Scheme staffing formula.

5.10. In addition, any ASN teaching and pupil support staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need across the Keith Associated Schools Group.

5.11. Every local authority in Scotland is required to grade their schools for condition and suitability. The grades range from A to D for each category with the following values:

- A: Good - Performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities)
- B: Satisfactory - Performing adequately but with minor problems (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities);
- C: Poor - Showing major problems and/or not operating adequately (the school buildings require continuous repair and does show signs of age/the school buildings and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)
- D: Bad – Economic life expired and/or risk of Failure (the school buildings and grounds do not support the delivery of services to children and communities).

5.12. Crossroads Primary School was assessed as B for suitability and C for condition prior to mothballing, with a number of elements at condition D. A breakdown of the condition elements is shown in the table below.

Roofs	Floors & Stairs	Ceilings	Ext. Walls, Windows & Doors	Int. Walls & Doors	Sanitary Services	Mechanical	Electrical	Decoration	Fixed Int. Facilities, Furniture & Fitting	External Areas	Outdoor Sports Facilities &	Overall Score	Condition Category
D	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	NA	40.98	C

Table 1. Core Condition Assessment (Overall and Individual Elements)

5.13. There is no current Education Scotland Inspection report available for Crossroads Primary School. The last reported HMIE Inspection visit was a short model visit in November 2017. The report was published in early 2018 and the

school was graded as 'satisfactory' in both Quality Indicators (QIs) forming the basis of short model inspection at that time: QI 1.1 (Self-evaluation for self-improvement) and QI 3.2 (Raising attainment and achievement).

## **6. Details of Proposal**

6.1. The Council proposes that Crossroads Primary School should be closed on a permanent basis. This would be with immediate effect from the completion of the consultation process. The Council also proposes that all existing primary aged pupils should continue their education at the schools they are currently attending. If the proposals are implemented any siblings of these current pupils would be able to join their brother/sister(s) at the same school.

6.2. The school catchment area would be reassigned to one of the neighbouring primary schools. Discussion of these options is set out in Section 7.

- **Option 1 - Re-open Crossroads Primary School** (Alternative to Closure 1)
- **Option 2 – Continue with the mothballing arrangements** (Alternative to Closure 2)
- **Option 3 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Keith Primary School**
- **Option 6 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School and Keith Primary School.**

### **Discounted options and alternatives to closure:**

- **Option 4 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Rothiemay Primary School.**
- **Option 5 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Newmill Primary School.**
- **Option 7 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School, Newmill Primary and Keith Primary School.**
- **Option 8 – Expand the catchment area** (Alternative to closure 3)

Details of the Council's consideration of the options and alternatives to closure are set out in Section 8 and the discounted options and alternatives in Section 9.

6.3. The options identified above would have a minor impact on the rolls of the schools affected. Table 1 below details the current roll and capacity of these schools over the next five years as per the Moray Council School Roll Forecast, using the census taken in September 2023. (The council has recently reviewed how it reports on primary school capacity, with physical capacity figures replaced by a planning capacity – which uses whole number multiples of classes at maxima. This changes Crossroads to a planning capacity of 50, rather than the physical capacity of 63 used during the mothballing process).

School	Suitability Rating	Condition Rating	Planning Capacity	Current Roll (Sep 23)	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
Crossroads	B	C	50					
Keith	A	A	409	325	321	318	328	325
Newmill	B	B	75	67	67	59	55	53
Rothiemay	B	C	75	55	52	53	54	51
St Thomas*			75	38	37	39	38	40

**Table 2. School Roll Forecast** (*\*Although not affected directly, St Thomas' RC Primary is included here as currently 3 pupils from the Crossroads catchment attend St Thomas – on placing requests rather than for faith-based reasons.*)

- 6.4. The catchment currently has 24 children of primary school age attending school. Of these, prior to mothballing, 19 were already being educated at Keith Primary, St Thomas Primary, or Rothiemay Primary at parental request.
- 6.5. Birth rate data included in previous school roll forecasts, indicate that within the Crossroads catchment area there are between 7 and 9 that would be expected to attend Crossroads School within the next three years. These pupils could be accommodated at Rothiemay or Keith primary schools. In 2025/26, if all pupils within the catchment were to attend Newmill, this would exceed the roll by 1 pupil.
- 6.6. Alternative uses for the building will be further explored with the community during the consultation period and beyond.
- 6.7. It is important that this proposal does not have a negative impact upon any children currently attending schools affected by this proposal and that they have continuity in their education.

## 7. Options Assessment

- 7.1. Officers applied an objective methodology to the assessment of the options which are discussed in Appendix A.
- 7.2. The options were considered at desktop appraisal meeting. In considering the options, account was taken of the fact that there is a presumption against closure of a rural school. As part of the options appraisal, the “rural school factors” specified in the School Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 have been given special regard. These are:
- Effect on Community
  - Effect on Travel Arrangements
  - Educational Benefit

In addition, the following factors were also taken into account.

- Views of parents and public expressed during engagement sessions
- Financial qualitative information
- Viability and timescale for options to be completed

- 7.3. Option 3, close Crossroads Primary School and re-zone to Keith Primary School was the preferred option, with Option 6 close Crossroads Primary School and split catchment between Keith Primary School and Rothiemay Primary School deemed to warrant consideration during the statutory consultation. Options 1 & 2 will be included in the statutory consultation as alternatives to closure. The remaining 4 options were discounted at this point.

Options	Final Ranking
Option 3 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone to Keith Primary School.	1
Option 6 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split catchment between Keith Primary School and Rothiemay Primary School.	2
Option 2 – Continue with the mothballing arrangements	3
Option 1 - Re-open Crossroads Primary School	4

Table 3 – Outcome of options appraisal

7.4. **Option 3 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone to Keith Primary School.**

7.4.1 The proposed catchment for this area for this option is shown below in Map 2.

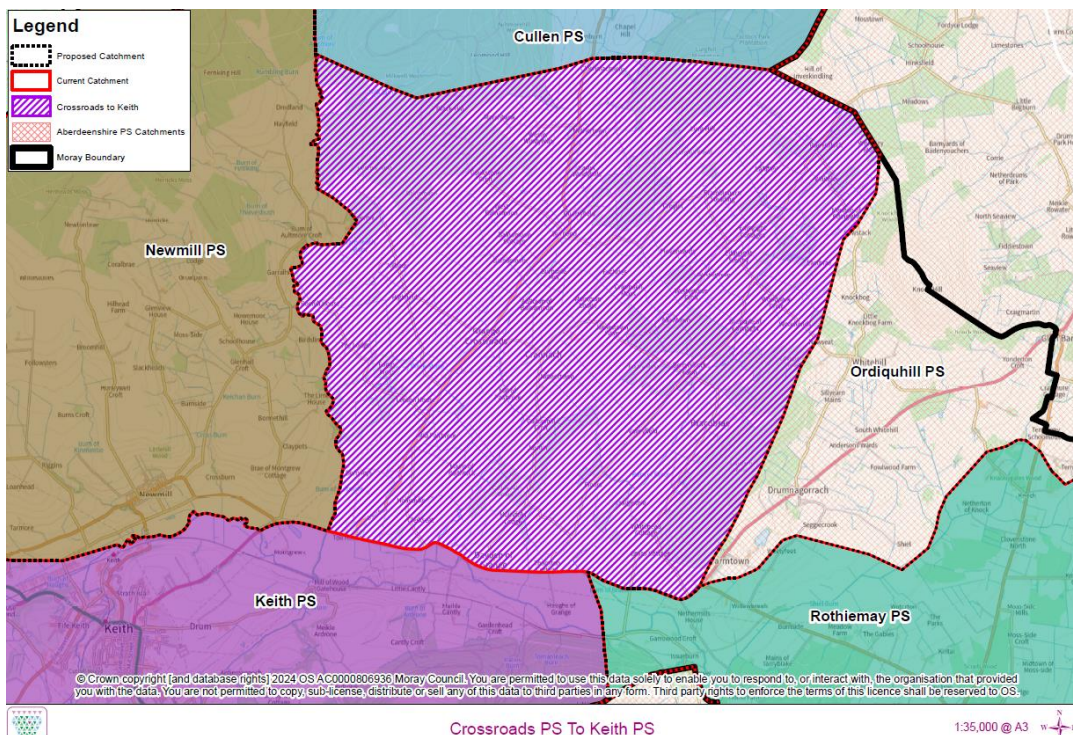
7.4.2 Keith Primary School is a single building school. It is a modern building, opened in 2012 with high quality indoor and outdoor learning spaces. It has a dedicated enhanced provision for young people with severe and complex needs. The school is non-denominational and Keith is classed as an “accessible small town” according to Scottish Government classification. It is situated on the northern edge of Keith, on the main A95, 4.1 miles from Crossroads Primary, as part of an education and community campus. This includes:

- Keith Grammar School (to which pupils from Crossroads catchment are zoned for their secondary education).
- Flexible Childcare Servies – Partner provision offering nursery placements, pre and post-school childcare.
- Keith Play Centre – Partner provision offering nursery placements.
- Keith Sports and Community Centre – offering indoor and outdoor sports facilities, swimming pool, multi-gym, meeting and social spaces

7.4.3 The school offers both primary education from P1-P7 and a Moray Council operated nursery on site. There is a paved plaza at the main entrance to the school with ample parking. The school has a sensory garden with seating; an outdoor amphitheatre. It is the largest primary school in the area, with 14 classrooms, an Art & Science Room, a Music & Drama Room as well as an enhanced provision space and a nurture room to support pupils with a range of additional support needs. The school has a purpose built and fully equipped additional support needs facility which includes a multi-sensory room, a soft-

play room, a life-skills room, as well as classrooms, a laundry, and disabled shower facility. It has an extensive playground area which includes a multi-use games area (MUGA) and an ‘Imagination Station’ to foster creativity skills in the outdoors. Meals are cooked and served on-site.

7.4.4 Keith Primary School has a planning capacity of 409 pupils and a current roll of 321 P1-P7 pupils (September 2023). These are currently distributed across 13 classes (4 composite, 9 single-stage). The school roll forecast suggests pupil numbers will remain stable until 2028/2029 – when it begins a slow decrease. to 298 in 2031. This represents a maximum 80% use of capacity over the next 8 years.



Map 2 – Proposed catchment area with rezoning Crossroads to Keith Primary School

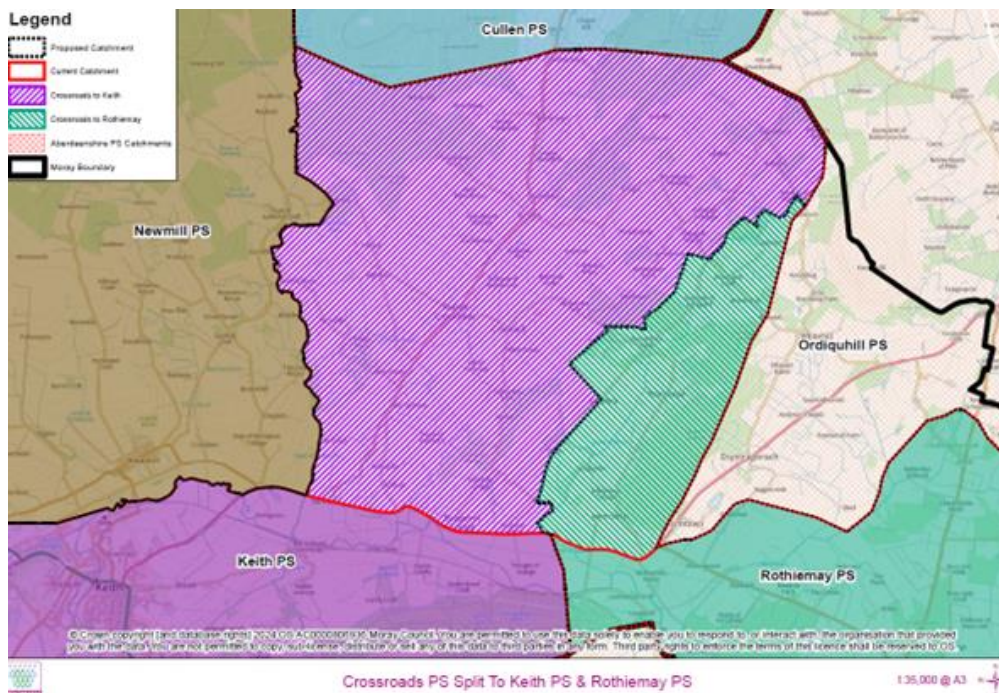
7.4.5 The class structure for the 2023/24 session is shown in Table 4 below:

Class Distribution	Current number in class	SPACE
P1	20	5
composite	21	4
P2	23	7
P2	25	5
composite	24	6
P3	26	4
P4	0	32
composite	30	2
P5	24	8

P5	28	4
P6	26	6
composite	24	8
P7	27	6
P7	27	6

**Table 4 – Keith Primary School Class Structure on Census Day 2023/24**

- 7.4.6 On census day, there were 44 children from out of zone (including 14 pupils from Crossroads) who were attending Keith Primary and 69 children who were zoned for Keith Primary who were attending elsewhere.
- 7.4.7 Keith Primary School is currently assessed as A for Suitability and Condition (Good - Performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities). As a PPP school, it will be maintained to this standard for the life of the contract (30 years)
- 7.4.8 There are 14 pupils from the Crossroads catchment currently attending Keith Primary School on placing requests (all made prior to mothballing) who are not eligible for transport to school within current transport contracts. With the permanent closure of Crossroads Primary School all of these would become eligible for local authority transport.
- 7.4.9 There is scheduled public transport (Service 309) linking Keith with Crossroads/Grange. The area is also serviced by Moray Council's 'M-Connect' on demand bus service, which operates from 6.00am to 8.00pm.
- 7.5. **Option 6 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split catchment between Keith Primary and Rothiemay Primary School**
- 7.5.1. The proposed catchments for this option are shown below in Map 3



**Map 3 – Proposed catchment area with rezoning Crossroads to Keith and Rothiemay primary schools**

7.5.2. Information on Keith Primary School remains as per Section 7.4

7.5.3. The main Rothiemay Primary School building was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century with later additions. It is situated in the centre of Milltown of Rothiemay on the minor B9118, 8.7 miles east of Keith, 7.7 miles north of Huntly and is 7.8 miles south-east of Crossroads Primary School by road. During mothballing a small number of pupils from the Crossroads catchment have been temporarily re-zoned, at parental request, on the Rothiemay Primary School roll. The school is non-denominational and is classed as “remote rural” school according to Scottish Government classification.

7.5.4. The school offers primary education from P1-P7. A partner playgroup is co-located with the school. Accommodation consists of three classrooms for school aged children, a shared dining room/PE hall (with servery area), a general-purpose room, quiet room, school office and staff room. The outside areas are a tarmac car-park area with a tarmac playground with multiple sheds for storage and a covered outdoor learning space (a wooden gazebo). There are extensive grassy areas, with football pitch, playground equipment/trim trail, wooded area, quiet garden and grassy play areas with seating. The playgroup has a segregated area of outdoor space. Meals are cooked at Keith Primary and transported to Rothiemay daily.

7.5.5. Rothiemay Primary School has a planning capacity of 75 pupils and a current roll of 55 P1-P7 pupils (September 2023). These are distributed across 3 composite classes. The school roll forecast suggests pupil numbers will decline slightly to 51 pupils over the next five years – with the current year being the maximum. This represents a 70% use of capacity.



7.5.6. The class structure for the 2023/24 session is shown in Table 5 below:

<b>Class Distribution</b>	<b>Current number in class</b>	<b>SPACE</b>
P1/2/3	19 (9,10)	8
P4/5	19 (11,8)	6
P6/7	17 (6,3,8)	6

Table 5 – Rothiemay Primary School Class Structure

7.5.7. On census day, there were 14 children from out of zone who were attending Rothiemay Primary (including 7 temporarily re-zoned from Crossroads) and 2 children who were zoned for Rothiemay who were attending elsewhere.

7.5.8. Rothiemay Primary School is currently assessed as A (88.9%) for Suitability (Good - Performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and communities)) and C (54%) for Condition (Poor - Showing major problems and/or not operating adequately (the school buildings require continuous repair and show signs of age/the school buildings and grounds impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school))

7.5.9. There are a small number of pupils from the Crossroads catchment area who currently attend Rothiemay Primary School on placing requests who do not have an entitlement to council provided school transport. With this option the permanent closure of Crossroads Primary School would likely see a small increase in the number of children entitled to council provided school transport to Rothiemay Primary.

## **8. Alternatives to the Closure Proposal**

8.1. In bringing forward this proposal for closure, the Council must have special regard to any viable alternatives to closure.

8.2. The detail of the Council's consideration of the alternatives is set out below.

### **8.3. Option 1 - Re-open Crossroads Primary School with Current Catchment Area**

8.3.1 There are currently 24 children of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of Crossroads School (SEEMIS extract April 2024). These children all attend other schools in the area. 17 were already attending other schools on out of zone placing requests at the point the school was mothballed (14 to Keith Primary, 3 to St Thomas RC Primary). Of the 5 who were enrolled at Crossroads, the families of 4 chose to send their children to Rothiemay Primary (and the Crossroads catchment was temporarily reassigned to Rothiemay) and 1 chose to send their child to Keith Primary.

- 8.3.2 There are no new houses either allocated within the local development plan, (which does allow for gap-site and infill development) and no applications with approved planning permission, or any in process within the Crossroads School catchment area. The last planning consent within the catchment was in 2011.
- 8.3.3 If the school were to re-open, some of the pupils that reside within the Crossroads catchment, should their families choose to enrol them at the school, would have a slightly shorter journey time than they do at present.
- 8.3.4 Reopening of the school would require full remediation of the site, and significant capital works to the building to achieve overall Condition B status. The cost of this has been estimated to be over £132k (assuming an August 2025 start) to support reopening and a further investment of over £207k over the next 5 years. This capital sum is not within the current capital plan and would need to be approved as an additional spend by elected members if Crossroads Primary School were to be reinstated.
- 8.3.5 Reopening of the school would require the community association to re-negotiate use of the former playing field with the landowner and fund appropriate insurance and any restoration required before it could be used by the school.

## **8.4 Option 2 - Continuation of the Mothballing Crossroads Primary School**

- 8.4.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current mothballing arrangement, Moray Council does not consider that would represent the best option for the community or taxpayer. Mothballing would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school. The Council would also be responsible for the costs of maintaining a mothballed building.
- 8.4.2 Scottish Government guidance relating to the mothballing of schools makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure and should not be used to undermine the requirements to undertake a statutory school closure consultation.
- 8.4.3 Crossroads School has not been operational since December 2023. During this period 7 pupils have been attending Rothiemay as their 'in-zone' school due to the mothballing of Crossroads. This period of uncertainty for families, a continuation of mothballing does not provide clarity to the situation.
- 8.4.4 Roll forecasts for the catchment do not indicate that there is the likelihood of any significant change in the school-aged population of the area during the next 2 years (the absolute maximum duration of any mothballing) – which would be required to achieve a sustainable school roll.
- 8.4.5 During the engagement process for mothballing, there were no parents of children already educated elsewhere on placing requests who indicated that they were likely to change their decision and request a placement at Crossroads. This would be required to achieve a sustainable school roll.
- 8.4.6 There have been 3 requests from children in Crossroads catchment for enrolment at Rothiemay PS during the period the school has been mothballed.

## **9 Discounted Options**

- 9.1 The detail of the Council's consideration of the discounted options is set out below:
- 9.1.1 **Option 4 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Rothiemay Primary School.**
- 9.1.2 There are currently 7 pupils from the Crossroads catchment attending Rothiemay Primary. Four are on placing requests that were made prior to the mothballing who are not entitled to transport, however funded transport is currently being provided as an interim measure for those pupils on the school roll at the point of mothballing of Crossroads Primary. This would mean that a number of pupils on placing requests to Rothiemay Primary (currently 7) would become entitled to funded transport.

- 9.1.3 The remaining 17 pupils resident in the Crossroads catchment are at Keith Primary and St Thomas RC Primary on placing requests that were made prior to mothballing. These 17 would remain as out of zone but were they all to change to their newly re-zoned school (Rothiemay) – this would take Rothiemay to 96% of functional capacity and exceed functional capacity within 5 years.
- 9.1.4 **Option 5 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Newmill Primary School.**
- 9.1.5 Currently none of the pupils zoned for Crossroads attends Newmill on a placing request. Newmill was not requested by the families of the 5 pupils that remained at Crossroads at the time of mothballing.
- 9.1.6 Newmill Primary is currently operating at 89% capacity – and could only accommodate 8 pupils from the Crossroads catchment.
- 9.1.7 **Option 7 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School, Newmill Primary and Keith Primary School.**
- 9.1.8 This would further fragment an already dispersed community and run the risk of further placing requests year on year to keep friendship groups together.
- 9.1.9 Currently none of the pupils zoned for Crossroads attends Newmill on a placing request – so there appears to be little appetite for this option. Of the 7 young people in the catchment who attend nursery provision, only 1 does so at Newmill Playgroup. None of the young people in the catchment who attend nursery provision do so at Rothiemay Playgroup.
- 9.1.10 Where families are able to make the choice, 17 out of 24 are choosing to send their young people to school in Keith, 6 out of 7 are choosing to send their children to nursery provision in Keith.

## **10. Education Benefits Statement**

- 10.1. In 2009, the Scottish Government set out its Vision for the Future School Estate in Scotland, in 'Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future'.
- 10.2. In September 2019, this was updated with Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy 'Connecting People, Places and Learning' which was developed by Scottish Government and COSLA. This contains ten guiding principles. Local Authorities are required to take account of these principles in planning changes to their school estate, namely:
- Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;

- Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transition for all learners;
- The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;
- The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function;
- 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;
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling and be digitally enabled;
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised;
- 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;
- Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential;
- Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

10.3. In May 2016, Moray Council approved the 'Schools for the Future': A policy for Sustainable Schools' in order to monitor schools provision in Moray and ensure provision continues to meet the needs of learners, parents and the community and enable the Council to meet its requirements to ensure best value, as per the Local Government Scotland Act 2003. This policy contributes to the aim of ensuring all children and young people in Moray have equality of opportunity in terms of access to educational provision and facilities.

10.4. Within this policy, Moray Council set criteria and indicators in determining optimum quality education experience which include provision of accommodation as reported to Children and Young People's Services Committee for:

- The range of curricular and wider school activities available for children to enable them to achieve in a range of activities for personal and wider achievement (e.g. physical education, music, art, drama) ;
  - The ability of the school to cater for children with Additional Support Needs;
  - The school’s ability to provide access to a suitably broad and balanced curriculum;
  - The quality of the physical environment for learning and teaching
    - Condition - minimum standard B
    - Suitability – minimum standard B
  - No more than two composite year groups in a single classroom at primary school level.
  - A minimum of four teachers at a primary school. This recognises both the needs of pupils and the demands on teachers; and.
  - Ideally, at least seven classrooms (one for each year group).
- 10.5. Key statutory requirements are further subsumed including delivery of 2 hours minimum Physical Education as part of National standards, compliance with statutory legislation in relation to school accommodation and Additional Support Needs, UNCRC and the overall extent of on-site accommodation and facilities (including required general purpose spaces, play and social spaces, staff rest areas and outdoor spaces).
- 10.6. Moray’s vision and strategic direction for all involved in Moray Education as set out in our Education Strategic Plan and Priorities 2023-2024 – underpinned by the core entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence in order to ensure all children and young people maximise development in the four capacities: Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens. This stems from Early Learning and Childcare, across the Broad General Education and through into the Senior Phase, working across our system to ensure our learners progress to positive and sustained post-school destinations. Underpinned by our Council values of Fair, Ambitious, Improving and Responsive we are *for Moray’s children*.
- 10.7. In order to deliver on our Education strategic vision and priorities, all Moray schools thus work towards:
- **Curriculum:** With ongoing national reform, reviews and wider national consultation ongoing, we recognise the importance of further developing

our curriculum across the BGE and into Senior Phase, in order to improve curriculum breadth and opportunities for all children and young people in Moray.

- **Learning, teaching and assessment:** High quality learning, teaching and assessment are fundamental for ensuring learners' experiences are matched to their talents, interests and needs in preparation for life and work. This includes planning high quality learning experiences across the four contexts for learning, extending skills, acquiring knowledge and developing in the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.
- **Reviewing Additional Support Needs:** Supporting our learners to progress throughout their learning journeys is essential in order for them to achieve, enabling progression to positive and appropriate post-school destinations and pathways. Ensuring universal and targeted supports and interventions are in place based on clear identification of need ensures we continue to nurture and support our children and young people.
- **Strengthening leadership & empowerment:** Through leadership and empowerment across our system, we will accelerate progress with our strategic priorities 1-3, supported by professional learning, development experiences and opportunities. Building capacity across our system, we will strengthen leadership at all levels and realise a sustainable service model as we look to the Education's service of the future.

10.8. As further educational context, *Curriculum for Excellence* guides us to achieve transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18 firmly focused on the needs of the child and young person and designed to enable them to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. All children and young people are entitled to experience:

- a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18.
- a broad general education, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas. This should include understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it and understanding of the environment.
- a senior phase which provides opportunities for study for qualifications and other planned opportunities for developing the four capacities.
- opportunities for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.
- opportunities to achieve to the highest levels they can through appropriate personal support and challenge; and,
- opportunities to move into positive and sustained destinations beyond school.

- 10.9. Educational benefits are considered below for pupils in respect of options previously outlined in this proposal document.
- 10.10. In December 2020, Moray Council approved the approach to the Moray Learning Estate Strategy, setting out the vision of providing a sustainable education service aiming for excellence. As well as improving condition and suitability as noted in 10.4 above, among wider outcomes this strategy aims to ensure our learning estate enriches the learner journey and supports curricular delivery noting the quality of learning environment as having a direct impact on learning and achievement of children and young people.
- 10.11. Ensuring all young people develop in the four Curriculum for Excellence capacities through the learner entitlements in 10.8 above would prove more challenging if Crossroads Primary School were to reopen with a reduced number of pupils across the Primary age range. This will also place additional pressures on staff, for example in planning for a wide range of needs, year groups and abilities, in developing the curriculum and managing educational change. As a result, multi-stage composite classes can prove challenging to recruit teachers compared with larger schools where classes have single or few stage composite arrangements. Opportunities for teaching staff to engage in regular and frequent moderation activities, allowing them to plan appropriate learning opportunities and make valid assessment decisions are enhanced in schools with more than 4 teaching staff, or even better, where stage partners are available.
- 10.12. Pupils attending other primary schools within the Keith Associated Schools Group regularly work in pairs and groups on shared learning tasks and cooperative learning activities. A school size low in pupil numbers, for example in a school of 10 or fewer children, based on potential future intake if Crossroads Primary School re-opened, would mean that groups would be curtailed in size restricting group and paired activities, with little to no flexibility in change or rotation of participants in pairings or groupings. Pupils could be spread multi-stage across P1 to P7, and while benefitting cross-stage working, this may result in reduced peer challenge in learning or potential for sibling pairing/groups. The variety of skills, knowledge and wider experiences brought to the groups would be further restricted by roll size and may result in gender imbalances and inequity in provision of a full programme of wider school activities.
- 10.13. In larger schools, staff regularly engage in joint projects (between stages and between teachers of the same stage) and staff professional and collegiate development activities. Children have regular opportunities to self and peer assess in these schools as well as work in stage and cross stage pairings and groups.
- 10.14. ICT has the potential to overcome some of the challenges for staff and young people in collaborative working as an integral part of the learning process, however there are ongoing issues with connectivity in rural areas, and access to sufficient ICT across Moray.



- 10.15. In Rothiemay and Keith Primary Schools, children have regular opportunities to work in cooperative learning groups, on paired and in group activities with three and thirteen classes formed in each school respectively. This further supports discussions and debate with a range of viewpoints and background of learners contributing to such activities. Class organisation within each school offers a blend of individual, group and class learning and teaching over the session. Children at Rothiemay Primary have access to single-stage hot-chocolate check-ins during the morning to allow them to share worries and concerns with their peers and relevant staff. Those at Keith Primary have a 30 minute active-start each morning, this allows for peer and group consolidation of learning, collaborative activities, teacher check-in on wellbeing and the application of learning, ICT and others skills.
- 10.16. The reopening of Crossroads would prove more restrictive for children to develop skills for learning, life and work with fewer or no opportunities to work with others of a similar age and stage, which is not possible in a school with a very low number of pupils, for example in a school of 10 or fewer children based on potential future intake. Pupils may miss opportunities to develop wider skills for life in particular with limited immersion and interaction with a wide range of peers - levels of attendance and participation may also impact further on this.
- 10.17. Keith Primary has capitalised on its easier access to local groups and employers to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the world of work and volunteering. Over the past year or so, SSEN have run workshops in school for youngsters to explore robotics, Chivas has worked with groups of pupils on the diversity of roles available in the food and drinks industry in Moray. Loganair has visited the school to talk about skills and careers in the airline industry and to develop team-working skills.
- 10.18. Collaboration with the wider staff in order to ensure a coherent and progressive curriculum can prove more difficult in a school with low roll-size. A progressive curriculum differentiated to meet the needs of each child with a focus on engaging and active learning experiences is in place in Rothiemay, with opportunities for personalisation and choice across the four contexts for learning. Rich contexts for learning include extensive use of the outdoor areas at school and in the wider community. Many of these activities are built on pupil-voice through the school council and young people with leadership roles. At Keith Primary, the staff have worked together to develop a curriculum that makes best use of their 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities – with learning taking place outdoors, in the classroom and in the dedicated breakout spaces – which all link together seamlessly. This starts from the moment they come in the doors with the use of Active Start Time. Crossroads, although in a rural setting, has more limited access to sustainable high quality outdoor learning space than Keith and Rothiemay primaries.
- 10.19. Interdisciplinary learning is one of the key contexts for learning at both Keith and Rothiemay Primaries. At Rothiemay Primary pupil voice is used to plan a rolling programme of group tasks, in the P1-3 class this is often focussed on developing interpersonal and problem-solving skills though outdoor learning –

which has been supported through partnership with Tesco and the Parent Council. Pupils in the P6/7 class worked with volunteers as the Spey Bay Whale & Dolphin Centre as part of an interdisciplinary project on marine life - which also includes links to DYW/Career Education. At Keith Primary School, the daily Active Start Time is used to bring together learning across subjects, apply it in new contexts and consolidate learning before identifying areas to focus on in the future.

10.20. Strong partnerships across the Keith Associated Schools Group exists with previous joint working on moderation, numeracy, health and wellbeing policy and wider curriculum development. Most recently work has focused on Maths and Numeracy, with agreed moderated assessments being in place across the ASG. The close proximity of Keith primary to Keith Grammar has allowed for very close working between staff at these two schools - with teachers from the high school visiting and taking classes at the primary in order to better understand the approaches being taken to meet the needs of all learners in numeracy and mathematics.

10.21. Keith Primary has very strong links with Active Schools,

10.22. Larger schools provide greater opportunities for pupil leadership and involvement in the ethos and wider life of the school as well as provision of a wider range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. At Rothiemay Primary School, House Captains, Vice-Captains and representatives are elected each year to lead houses, pupil voice activities and inter-house challenges including sporting events, and contribute to whole school change initiatives. Community groups can access Keith Primary through the school let process.

10.23. There are formal connections between Keith Nursery and Keith Primary, as they share the same building, and between Rothiemay and its partner nursery which support the transition of children into P1 at both schools.

10.24. The range of interactions offered by all schools and the leadership and wider skills development opportunities presented strengthen capacity to work with others as part of a team, problem solve, make decisions and increase confidence in learners. As part of a peer group of a sufficient size, social interaction will enable further development of skills for learning life and work and build self-efficacy and esteem. A school size low in pupil numbers, for example in a school of 10 or fewer children based on potential future intake severely restricts opportunities for team sports, meaningful pupil leadership opportunities, clubs and other active recreational activities.

10.25. ASN provision at Crossroads primary was very limited prior to mothballing, due to the very small number of pupils at the school.

10.26. Keith Primary School has the Primary Enhanced Provision base for children with Additional Support Needs for the Associated Schools Group. This gives young people who need this level of support the opportunity to attend for part of the time, also attending mainstream classes. The school has a purpose built

and fully equipped additional support needs facility which includes a multi-sensory room, a soft-play room, a life-skills room, as well as classrooms, a laundry, and disabled shower facility. It provides specialist support for identified young people and support on group and one-to-one basis. Multi-agency links are in place with key partners including Health, Social Work and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. The facilities are managed by a PT ASN as part of a team of 4.0 FTE teaching time plus over 400 hours of PSA time – this allows for extensive collaboration with class teachers and regular intervention where required. At Rothiemay Primary School, class teachers support all children where required with support assistant input for targeted need. The school has 2 days of dedicated ASN teacher time along with PSA/CA hours dependant on need (currently 22 hours).

10.27. All schools within Keith Associated Schools Group benefit from their location in an area of outstanding natural beauty with access to extensive countryside. The nationally significant River Isla flows through Keith and Rothiemay is at the confluence of the Rivers Isla and Deveron – both of these provide opportunities for outdoor learning as well as access to partnership working with the Bogie, Isal and Deveron River Trust. The trust employs a biologist who has visited both schools to work with youngsters. As a town school, Keith Primary School is in close proximity to Keith Grammar School as the local secondary school, with access to a range of external areas including a playing field, outdoor garden area and hard-standing playground/parking area. The campus currently houses a local authority and partner nursery. Also sharing the campus is the swimming pool, community sport facilities and a second, larger multi-use games area.

10.28. Rothiemay Primary School enjoys large grounds with hardstanding areas, outdoor classroom/shelter, a large playing field, trim trail, quiet garden, a range of play equipment and seating areas as well as a small area of woodland on site. The school is close by the River Deveron which has large areas of accessible river bank that can be utilised for nature walks – and is a core component of the school's values – which spell out 'RIVER'. Groups of children are actively involved in gardening projects at various points in the curriculum. During snowy weather, the local community park nearby has a hill next to the school is used as a sledge run as well as a play-area, tennis court and football field for when the sun shines. Keith Primary School has an area of hardstanding adjacent to each classroom with direct access from the room. Outdoor areas are resourced with age-appropriate materials to stimulate learning. The wider grounds include further areas of hardstanding and a multi-use games area (MUGA). These areas are zoned, some separated by high fencing to allow the older/stronger pupils to play football, basketball etc without impacting on the younger ones. These team sports and game-based activities can be maximised with the number of pupils on the roll of both schools enabling such activities. A larger staffing complement and parent body further increases the likelihood of interested adults leading a broader range of activities (for example both Rothiemay and Keith primaries have had parent support to run jogging clubs). Keith Primary has access to a large area of playing fields belonging to the adjacent high school, as well as a small area of woodland on site. Staff in school make use of the Keith Community Minibus, which is based on-site to facilitate trips to the local area – for example local beaches.

- 10.29. The Scottish Government's policy on Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach is aimed at ensuring that every child in Scotland has the opportunity to learn a modern language from P1 onwards (known as L2). Additionally, each child, irrespective of ability should have the right to learn a second modern language from P5 onwards (known as L3). Opportunity to learn a second modern language is strengthened through pupil peer support in learning a first or second language with opportunity for stage appropriate paired and group activities, including rotation of participants where needed to extend language acquisition through listening and talking, reading and writing based activities. In a larger school, staff peer support for languages teaching and building staff confidence in delivery to specific stages is strengthened where stage partner planning is supported as well as in delivery of appropriately challenging stage appropriate group and paired learning activities. This may not be possible or more complex to plan for, where there are very low pupil numbers within specific stages (for example in P5-P7) in a smaller multi-stage composite school and class environment where the school size means that there are low pupil numbers to support activities as outlined above.
- 10.30. Rothiemay Primary benefits from a very small amount of Pupil Equity Funding and uses this creatively to support identified children, with interventions reaching further than those where impact is directed. Keith primary has a much larger allocation, which it uses to run a whole school resource (The Oak Room). This is staffed by PEF-funded support staff undertaking Literacy interventions and Numeracy interventions as well as work to improve confidence and social skills as part of identified pupils' Health & Wellbeing development. Staff within this provision have successfully supported young people in gaining Hi 5 awards. Keith Primary uses its profiling information to focus the application of PEF funds on supporting pupils to seek out new opportunities and challenges. This might be by directing and supporting youngsters to opportunities that already exist or offering new ones – recent examples include Mixed Martial Arts training, swimming and visiting local beaches.
- 10.31. Keith and Rothiemay Primary Schools both have Parent Councils (both use alternative names) formed who meet regularly throughout the year. Both Parent Councils represent the views and interests of parents and pupils and support school improvement. There is a very strong sense of community in both schools, enhanced by the fact that a number of teaching staff and almost all support staff, live within the community. Sustainable partnerships with parents and the wider community further enrich the curriculum and children are supported to take an active part in the school and wider community.
- 10.32. At both Keith and Rothiemay, active and supportive Parent Councils fundraise for school trips and activities and also contribute to providing resources – for example outdoor learning equipment. As well as direct fundraising, they have successfully applied for funding through third parties (like local supermarkets and businesses). At Keith Primary parents have been active in supporting the school's work on DYW. If Crossroads were to re-open then there would be

potential for a Parent Council to operate. However, with a small pupil cohort there would be a limited number of families able to participate – particularly where sibling groups may feature – resulting in greater reliance on a few individuals to support the school in this way.

- 10.33. Keith and Rothiemay Primary Schools are central establishments within their respective communities. Keith primary has with strong links to other organisations including local churches, local businesses and pre-school providers. Rothiemay Primary is the only Moray Council building in use within the village of Rothiemay. Along with the Church, Village Hall, Community Playing Fields & Pavilion and Hotel it is the focus for almost all community activities.
- 10.34. Section 3 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 requires local authorities to endeavour to raise standards and secure improvement in the quality of school education provided in our schools for all learners. It is Moray Council's view that the pupils from the Crossroads catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at other larger neighbouring schools. Formalising the current arrangements would provide a number of such benefits, judged against both the Moray and National criteria set out above.
- 10.35. As all pupils from the Crossroads Primary School catchment currently attend Keith Primary School, Rothiemay primary School or St Thomas' Primary School depending on current zoning arrangements or parental choice, no adverse effects for those pupils are expected to arise from the permanent closure of Crossroads Primary School.

## **11. Effect on the Local Community**

- 11.1. Moray Council recognise that the uncertainty surrounding the future of the school has impacted on the community and it is hoped that this statutory consultation to close Crossroads Primary School will give clarity to the community and a sense of certainty regarding their children's education.
- 11.2. Crossroads Primary School is situated in a dispersed rural location with no obvious centre. The nearest community, King Memorial Hall, is the village hall for the community of Grange – it runs a diverse range of events and activities for the local community – it is 3.8 miles away. Grange Parish Church is 2.6 miles from the school with a limited amount of dedicated parking – and holds services on the third Sunday of the month along with any seasonal or special events. It is a member of the wider linked parishes of Keith: St. Rufus, Botriphnie and Grange – with regular joint community events taking place in St Rufus Hall, Keith.
- 11.3. Several meetings have been held with the local community and parents in the catchment area of the school. Although attendance at these meetings was low, attendees raised concerns that there would be no community space in the area around the school such as a meeting place, picnic or play area for the community.

- 11.4. There has been no community use of the land or building since the school was mothballed in 2023 and prior to this community events tended to be based at the village hall – with no outside lets taking place at the school. The school had use of an area of ground, leased by the community association, as a playing field. This has been returned to agricultural use by the landowner since mothballing
- 11.5. The site is owned by Moray Council, the council would welcome input from the community as to sustainable options for the building and land use should the proposal to close the school be approved.
- 11.6. Keith is the closest town, approximately 4 miles from the school, with public amenities, including a swimming pool, high school, railway station, public library, supermarket, local shops and public parks. It is on the main A96 trunk road linking Aberdeen and Inverness – with regular direct bus services to both via Inverurie and Elgin respectively. Keith Primary School is 4.1 miles from Crossroads Primary School and Rothiemay Primary School slightly further at 7.8 miles. As well as a primary school, Rothiemay has a pub/ hotel, a village hall and a church (linked to the joint parishes of Keith: North, Boharm and Rothiemay).

## **12. School Transport**

- 12.1. During the 2022/3 session, prior to mothballing, 5 pupils were provided with transport to Crossroads Primary School at a cost of £177.21 per day.
- 12.2. Following mothballing, 4 pupils are provided transport to Rothiemay Primary School and one to Keith primary school on an amended contract at the additional cost of £129.00 per day (£306.21 per day in total).
- 12.3. From Aug 2023, the daily cost was reduced to £242.21 per day as the pupil travelling to Keith primary had moved on to S1.
- 12.4. Rezoning some or all of the Crossroads catchment to Keith Primary will require additional transport for some of the 14 children from the Crossroads catchment who currently attend Keith primary on placing requests (who are not currently eligible for funded transport). This would be of positive benefit to these families who currently have to arrange their own transport.

## **13. Financial Implications**

- 13.1. As mentioned in Section 12 above the proposed changes could result in an increase in costs for school transport provision, which would need to be met by Moray Council. The increase is expected not to be significant and when bus-contracts are re-negotiated, some or all of this may be recouped by sharing transport contracts with Keith Grammar pupils from the catchment.

13.2. Further details of the financial impact of this proposal are included in the financial template provided at Appendix B. The costs provided in the template derive from 2022/23 when the school was last operational, which has been corrected for inflation to provide a forecast for 2023/24 if Crossroads Primary School was reopened. With a potential school roll of 5 this would equate to a cost of £34,930 per pupil per year against a Moray average of £6,060 per pupil per year (from a range across Moray excluding Crossroads of £3,976 to £11,957 per pupil per year).

13.3. The annual recurring saving of mothballing Crossroads is £130,777. This increases to £181,956 per year if Crossroads is closed and once any salary conservation is removed (based on 2023-24 values).

#### 14. Sustainability

14.1. A carbon assessment of Crossroads Primary, Rothiemay Primary and Keith Primary - where the majority of pupils are educated following mothballing - by the Climate Change Strategy Officer is summarised in the table below. This shows that education provided through either of the alternatives being investigated is less carbon intensive.

	Heating oil		Electricity		Water		Total	Total per pupil
	Carbon emissions (tCO2e)	Carbon impact per pupil (tCO2e/pupil)	Carbon emissions (tCO2e)	Carbon impact per pupil (tCO2e/pupil)	Carbon emissions (tCO2e)	Carbon impact per pupil (tCO2e/pupil)	Annual CO2 Emissions (Tonnes)	Carbon impact per pupil (tCO2e/pupil)
Crossroads Primary	0.00	0.00	13.50	2.70	0.10	0.02	13.60	2.72
Rothiemay Primary	2.50	0.05	6.40	0.12	0.10	0.00 ( <i>de minimis</i> )	9.00	0.16
Keith Primary	0.00	0.00	48.70	0.15	0.50	0.00 ( <i>de minimis</i> )	49.20	0.15

14.2. The additional school transport mileage associated with travel to and from Rothiemay Primary School for pupils local to Crossroads Primary School requires to be considered but as there are no fixed school transport routes - contractors are given a pupil address list and work out the most efficient route - it is therefore not possible to assess the detailed impact of the additional mileage with mothballing or closure of Crossroads Primary School. The potential for the 14 pupils currently being transported (most of them separately) to Keith primary being able to use a single school transport vehicle is likely to reduce the total number of journeys, and therefore the environmental impact of travel to school for this cohort of young people. Any future school transport tenders will include a sustainability weighting?

- 14.3. Overall the carbon impact per pupil is substantially lower at Keith and Rothiemay compared with Crossroads. This includes the pupils on the school rolls from the Crossroads catchment from January 2023. The reopening of Crossroads Primary School would therefore significantly increase carbon emissions in the future, outweighing any additional transport emissions associated with longer pupil journeys to Rothiemay or Keith. As mentioned in 12.3, rezoning some or all of the Crossroads catchment to Keith Primary will allow some or all of the 14 children from the Crossroads catchment who currently attend Keith primary on placing requests to use public (school bus) transport. This would reduce the overall number of journeys currently being undertaken by families to get their children to school.
- 14.4. The closure of Crossroads Primary School is therefore forecast to lead to carbon savings for Moray Council.
- 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 changes the teaching dynamic, requiring teachers to be highly adept in managing the curriculum, differentiation and assessment for pupils from primary 1 - 7 in one or just 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 requires carefully planning with their paired school or others local schools within the ASG and increased use of digital resources to allow online communities, however some rural settings also have connectivity difficulties.

## **15. Implications for Staff**

- 15.1. Prior to mothballing, Crossroads was managed through a paired-headship model. As a consequence of mothballing the following interim changes were put in place:



	<b>Teaching Staffing</b>		
	<b>FTE (before mothballing)</b>		<b>FTE (post mothballing)</b>
	<b>CPS</b>	<b>RPS</b>	<b>RPS</b>
Head Teacher	0.5	0.5	1.0
Principal Teacher	1.0	1.0	1.0
Class Teacher	1.0	2.0	2.0
McCrone	0.12	0.4	0.4
PT 10 days cover	0.05	0.05	0.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>4.45</b>
	<b>Support Staff</b>		
	<b>Hours (before mothballing)</b>		<b>Hours (post mothballing)</b>
Playground Supervisor	7	7	7
Lunchtime Auxiliary	7.5	7.5	7.5
Classroom Assistant	25	12.5	12.5
Admin	11	17	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>50.5</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>

These arrangements retain the HT post at SP 4, and the Principal Teacher post which is a component of the paired headship model is also retained. The existing PT from Crossroads Primary is on maternity leave.

- 15.2. In the event of Crossroads Primary School closing the amended teaching staff arrangement compared with mothballing are as per table below

	<b>Teaching Staff</b>	
	<b>FTE (mothballed)</b>	<b>FTE (CPS closed)*</b>
	<b>RPS</b>	<b>RPS</b>
Head Teacher	1.0	1.0
Principal Teacher	1.0	0
Class Teacher	2.0	1.46
McCrone	0.4	0.26
PT 10 days cover	0.05	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>2.72</b>
	<b>Support Staff</b>	
	<b>Hours (mothballed)</b>	<b>Hours (CPS closed)</b>
Playground Supervisor	7	7
Lunchtime Auxiliary	7.5	7.5
Classroom Assistant	12.5	12.5
Admin	17	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>

\* The reduction is not a direct result of mothballing Crossroads rather the school roll at Rothiemay has reduced in the intervening period and so their staff has had to reduce to 2.72 FTE.

The Head Teacher post would move to SP3 from SP4 – cash conserved for 3 years.

The Principal Teachers would need to be redeployed to an equivalent post and/or be cash conserved for 3 years.

## **16. Equal Opportunities**

- 16.1. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a statutory requirement on 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 assessment has been carried out, as part of the options appraisal process.
- 16.2. The aim of an IIA is to examine policies and practice in a structured way to make sure 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 main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from Crossroads to Rothiemay or Keith primaries. As the school has been mothballed for more than 1 school session, all pupils are currently making the journey to the alternative school. When given the choice of alternatives, the families of 4 out of 5 pupils elected to send their children to the furthest-away option, which suggests that travel time is not a high priority in making the selection of school. Of the 24 young people currently living in the catchment area, almost all were already choosing to send their children to the schools that were further away.
- 16.4. Funded school transport would be provided for all entitled P1-7 pupils attending Keith or Rothiemay primary schools from the current Crossroads catchment area, if one of the proposed options is approved. Pupils from the Crossroads catchment currently attending Rothiemay Primary who receive funded transport due to the temporary re-zoning will retain their funded transport if their catchment changes due to the option chosen.
- 16.5. 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 about equality during this consultation.
- 16.6. Under the Equality Act 2010 education providers must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and should take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. Any existing arrangements in place for pupils within the schools affected with additional support needs will continue. As discussed previously, Keith Primary School is the enhanced provision hub for the Keith ASG, and as such is fully adapted to meet the requirements of pupils with a range of additional support needs.

## **17. Consultation Arrangements**

- 17.1. At its meeting on 17 September 2024 Moray Council's Education, Communities and Leisure Services Committee were asked to agree that a proposal document should be issued as a basis for consultation. No decision will be taken by the Council on the proposal contained in the paper until after the end of the consultation period. The Council will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.
- 17.2. A copy of this document will be issued to all of the consultees listed on the first page of this document and it will also be published on the Council's website.
- 17.3. Reading copies of this proposal document will be made available at Keith Community Centre, Keith Library, Elgin Central Library, Rothiemay Primary School, Keith Primary School, Newmill Primary, St Thomas's RC Primary School and Keith Nursery.
- 17.4. The period for consultation will run from 23 September 2024 to 15 November 2024 which adequately covers the statutory requirement period of 30 school days.

- 17.5. Two public meetings will be held. It is planned that the first will be with current and future parents/carers on Monday, 21 October 2024 at Keith Grammar School, School Road, Keith, AB55 5GS, and the second for the wider community on Tuesday, 22 October 2024 at King Memorial Hall Church, Grange, AB55 6SL. The exact timings and locations for these meetings will be agreed with relevant stakeholders early in the consultation process to facilitate maximum attendance.
- 17.6. An optional online meeting will be planned for Wednesday 23 October at 7pm and anyone wishing to attend this meeting should express their interest by emailing [learningestate@moray.gov.uk](mailto:learningestate@moray.gov.uk)
- 17.7. The meetings 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 both meetings. A minute will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.
- 17.8. Opportunities will be provided for the staff working in Rothiemay and Keith primary schools to discuss the proposals. Opportunities will also be arranged for impacted primary pupils at each of the schools to engage in the consultation in a manner appropriate to their age.

An online survey will be available as part of the consultation. This can be completed at the following address:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J3P7XND> – or by scanning the QR code below:



- 17.9. The Council will also consider any written comments which should be emailed to [LearningEstate@moray.gov.uk](mailto:LearningEstate@moray.gov.uk) . Alternatively, any comments can be sent to **Community Support Officer (Learning Estate), HQ Room 207a, Elgin Council Offices, High Street Elgin IV30 1BX**. Comments should be received no later than 1200 on Friday 15 November 2024.
- 17.10. A copy of this document will also be sent to Education Scotland. 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 representations made at the public meeting and a copy of any other relevant documentation. Education Scotland will then prepare a report on the

educational aspects of the proposal. In preparing their report, they may visit the school 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 Education Scotland 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 Education Scotland Report, a response to issues raised through any written or oral representations it has received, together with a copy of the Education Scotland 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 Education Scotland 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 report on the consultation process with recommendations will be submitted to the Education, Childcare and Leisure Services Committee in February 2025.

## **19. Decision Making**

- 19.1. The consultation report will be considered by Education, Communities and Leisure Services Committee who will be asked to review and make a comment on the officer recommendation.
- 19.2. Following discussion and recommendation at the Education, Communities and Leisure Services Committee, Full Council will consider the report and be asked to approve the officer recommendation in the report. This is expected to be February 2023.
- 19.3. 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 Crossroads Primary School.

- 19.4. 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 decision to decide if they will call in the proposal. The Council must publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified and that representations can be made to the Scottish Ministers within the first three weeks of the eight-week period. The Scottish Ministers will take into account any relevant representations that were made to them by any person within the first three weeks. The Council may not proceed with the implementation of the proposal until this eight-week period has passed.
- 19.5. 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, refuse consent 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 account Moray Council recommends that Crossroads Primary School, currently mothballed, is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to either Keith Primary School or a combination of Keith and Rothiemay primary schools as outlined in Options 3 & 6 above.
- 20.2. Whichever decision is taken with respect to catchment areas, existing pupils will not be required to change schools. This will also apply to any younger siblings of such pupils, provided they remain at the same primary school.
- 20.3. This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements.

Appendix A – Options Appraisal

Appendix B – Crossroads Primary School Financial Report