

Crossroads Primary School Options Appraisal

1. Introduction

Moray Council strives to allocate its resources in a way that ensures the quality of all its services. It attaches particular importance to providing the best possible educational experience for all pupils within its schools.

The Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate was agreed at a Special Meeting of the Moray Council on 9 October 2020 in accordance with Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy (Connecting People, Places and Learning). The Council's strategy sets out the council's aspirations for our schools using a holistic place-based approach, which will ensure that services can be delivered in an optimum way, making best use of available assets.

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that educational benefits should be at the heart of any proposal to make a significant change to schools, for current and future pupils in the area.

At its meeting on 7th June 2023, the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee agreed to the preparation of an options appraisal regarding the future of Crossroads Primary School and supported community engagement as part of the options appraisal process to identify alternative options to consider.

2. Background / Discussion

During the 2022-2023 school session the school roll at Crossroads Primary School dropped due to a number of families moving schools for several reasons. As the school session continued it was clear that there was a risk that at the start of the 2023-2024 session that the school roll would be significantly lower than the total catchment of 24, and below the Moray Council policy threshold of 15 pupils – which triggers mothballing.

As of August 2022 the school roll was 5 as all other catchment children were enrolled at neighbouring schools. Due to less than 15 pupils attending the school during the 2022-23 session, the Education Service, following Moray Council policy, was left with no alternative but to mothball Crossroads Primary School. Families of the 5 pupils still attending Crossroads Primary elected to send their children to Keith primary (2 pupils) and Rothiemay Primary (3 pupils). 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.

Mothballing is a temporary closure of a school which does not in itself lead to statutory consultation. Reference is made to the report considered by the Children and Young People's Committee on 28th September 2022 where this decision was ratified. The Primary 1 admission period for all Moray Schools takes place in January each year. No applications to Crossroads Primary School have been received since the school was mothballed.

The deadline for submitting out of zone placing requests is March each year. There have been no applications received for pupils wishing to attend Crossroads Primary School through the placing requests process since the school was formally mothballed on 9th January 2023.

As there continues to be no expectation of pupils enrolling at Crossroads Primary School, the school remains mothballed.

A report to Moray Council's Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 7th June 2023, following a review of the mothballing decision, set out proposals for the new academic year starting in August. Councillors agreed to start the process of actively considering the long-term future of Crossroads Primary, which is designated a remote rural school.

This options appraisal will involve engagement with the Crossroads catchment community including children, parents/carers, staff, individual community members and representative community groups. One of the options to be considered would be the closure of the school. If this is considered to be the only viable option for Crossroads Primary, then the council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

3. Community Engagement

The Education and Learning Estates Teams conducted the following engagements with the school and wider Crossroads community to keep them fully informed and to explore potential options for the future of Crossroads Primary School.

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

A summary of comments and suggestion gathered during and following the meetings and the online survey is at Appendix I to this report.

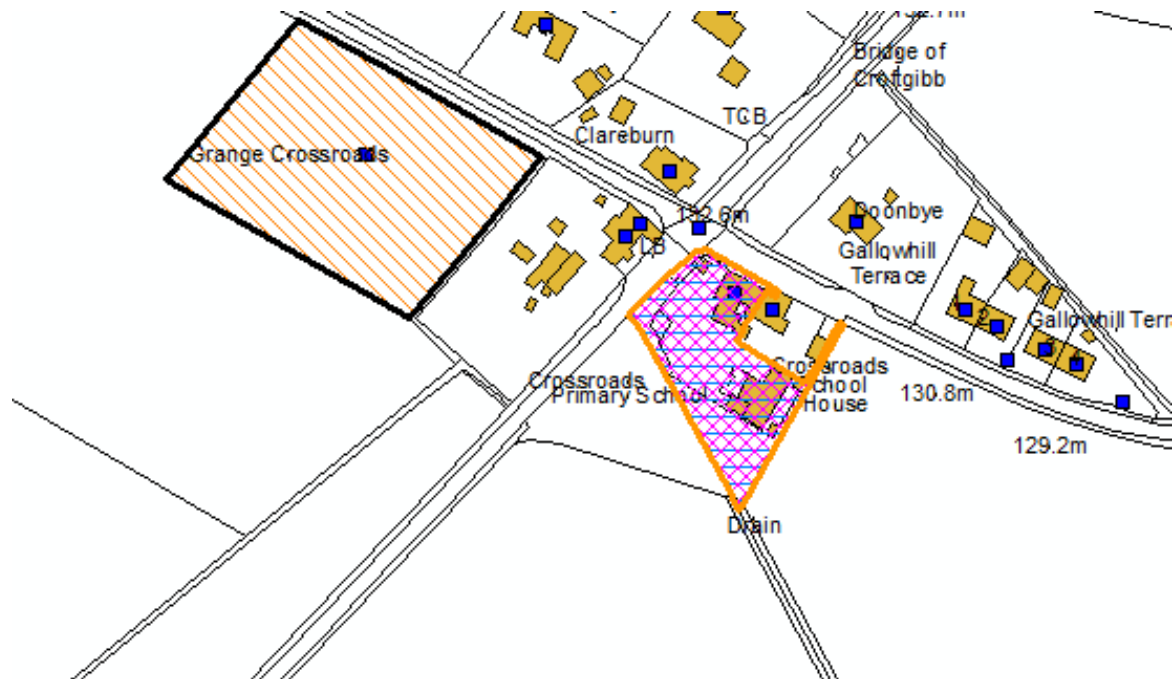
4.1 Crossroads Primary School

Crossroads Primary School is located 4 miles North West of Keith on an elevated site within the dispersed community of Grange. 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 and there are concerns about the maintenance and insurance for this area. 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 functional capacity of 63 pupils. 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. The school floorplan is attached as Appendix II and a map of the school ground and its surrounding amenities is shown in Map 1 below with the school boundaries in orange.

Map 1 – Crossroads Primary School



The school has a kitchen which served meals that were prepared at Keith Primary School and delivered to Crossroads Primary School daily.

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.

Condition is an assessment of the physical condition of the school building and its grounds. Crossroads Primary School was assessed at Cat **C** for condition overall in October 2022 prior to mothballing (*C = Poor - Showing major problems and/or not operating adequately - the school buildings require continuous repair and shows signs of age*), with significant elements (Roof, External Walls, Windows and Doors) at **D** (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)).*

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

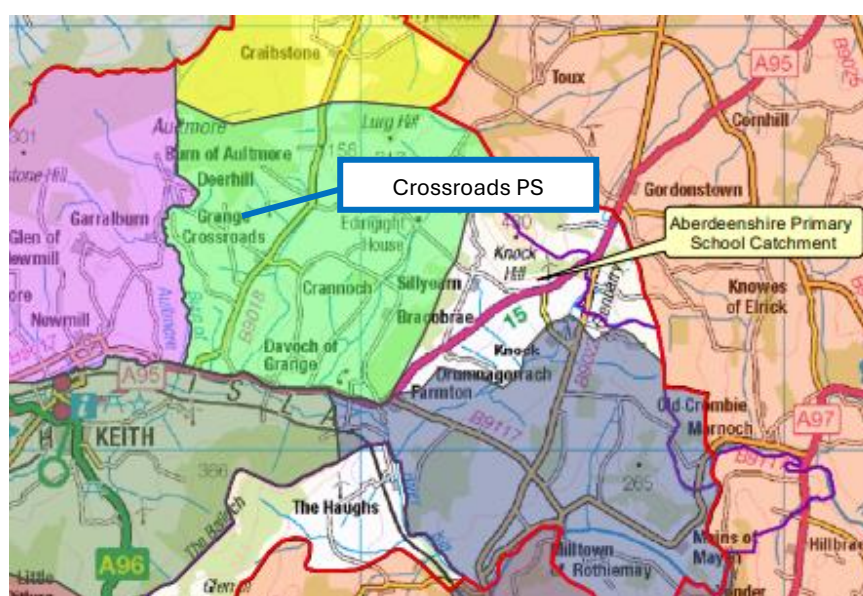
Table 1. Core Condition Assessment (Overall and Individual Elements)

Suitability is an assessment of the school as a whole, the buildings, the grounds and the impact they have on teaching and learning, leisure and social activities, as well as the health and wellbeing of users. The Suitability assessment of Crossroads Primary School was carried out in 2020 the school was graded as **B**, satisfactory – performing well but with minor problems (school buildings and grounds generally support the delivery of services).

4.2 Crossroads and Local Area

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification defines Crossroads Primary School as “remote rural”, meaning that it serves a population of less than 3,000 and is more than 30 minutes’ drive from a settlement of 10,000 or more.

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 2 – 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.

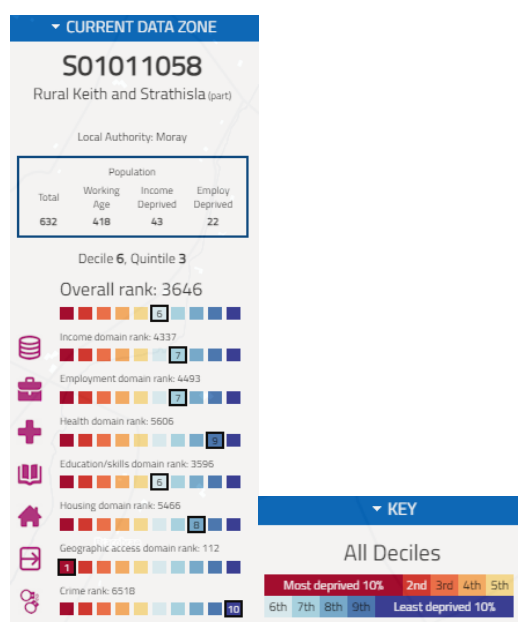


Table 2. SIMD 2020 Ranking – Rural Keith and Strathisla

4.3 Rural Sustainability and Housing Development

Crossroads Primary is within the wider community of Grange on the minor B9018 that links the A95 Keith to Banff road with the coast at Cullen. The community is dispersed across the catchment, with community facilities available at King Memorial Hall in the South East corner of the catchment. There is no shop or post-office, although the area is visited by mobile shops on a regular basis.

Information received from The Council's Community Economic Development Team indicates that there are no significant new business activities in the Crossroads area.

There is no significant housing development for the Crossroads catchment within the current Local Development Plan.

4.4 Demographics and Pupil Numbers

In the 5 years up to the mothballing of Crossroads Primary School in January 2023 the school roll declined steadily from 19 to just 5 pupils with numerous placing requests from the catchment. There were 19 pupils living within the catchment attending other schools on placing requests prior to discussions about mothballing commencing.

The position is shown in the table below:

Census data	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
P1-P7	19	16	13	11	5

Table 3 - School Roll Data 2018-2022

There are currently 24 children of P1-P7 age residing within the catchment area of Crossroads School (Census data extract September 2023). These children all attend other schools in the area, all by parental choice. The majority attend Keith Primary School (14) with a smaller number at Rothiemay Primary School (7) and St Thomas Primary School (3).

SEEMIS data indicates there were 4 children within the Crossroads catchment that could have enrolled for P1 in August 2023 but only 1 request was made.

School roll forecasts show 7 families living in the catchment area with children that are under school age who attend nursery. 6 children can enrol in 2024 and 1 in 2025 but if they all did, the school roll numbers would remain below 10. Of these 7, 6 are enrolled at nursery in Keith, 1 in Newmill.

4.5 Occupancy

In line with the Learning Estates Strategy an ideal school occupancy level would be approximately 80%, aspiring to the occupancy band of between 60% and 80%. The physical capacity of Crossroads Primary is 63, with a planning capacity of 50 pupils. At its peak the school roll had 19 pupils in the 2018-2019 session – an occupancy of just 38% of the functional capacity (30% of the physical capacity). The 5-year average occupancy is just over 25% of planning capacity. Such a low occupancy level is unsustainable, unaffordable, does not offer best value.

4.6 Pupil Enrolments

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.

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.

4.7 Crossroads Community

While in operation, the school did not operate a breakfast or after school club and there were no community lets of the school buildings. The local community did not make informal use of the school buildings or grounds out with school hours.

Keith Community Centre is adjacent to Keith Grammar School 4 miles away. The Community Centre has a swimming pool, fitness suite, sports hall, outdoor pitches and a regular programme of activities. Both the School and Community Centre has a range of rooms and facilities for hire for activities such as exercise classes, courses, committee meetings, sports and hobbies, counselling sessions, training sessions and rehearsals.

King Memorial Hall (known locally as Grange Hall) is 3.8 miles away, the hall is a thriving hub of the wider Grange community, used by a number of groups for regular meetings and social events involving sports, music, dancing and more. It is also set up as a voluntary support centre in the event of major incident or disruption to the power supply to the area.

4.8 Options for Consideration

The following options were considered for the future of Crossroads Primary School as part of the options appraisal:

Option 1 - Re-open Crossroads Primary School - Over the past 5 years the school was operating, the number of in-zone pupils being educated elsewhere on placing request has increased with only 5n (out of 24) pupils being on roll at the point the school was mothballed. For the current session, there has only been 1 parent requesting to enrol their child in Crossroads Primary School. Reopening the school would also require considerable investment to bring the school up to the minimum expectation of Category B for both condition and suitability.

Option 2 – status quo. School remains mothballed for a further session and potentially beyond. The school has been mothballed since January 2023. The longer the school is mothballed the more uncertainty for families and the community the situation causes. A large proportion of the families who live within catchment are currently required to transport their children to an out-of-zone school as they are being educated through a placing request. There is also a greater chance of mechanical failure of heating, lighting and plumbing systems while it is not operational. Unoccupied buildings deteriorate more quickly than operational premises and are more likely exposed to potential crimes and acts of vandalism.

Option 3 – Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Keith Primary School. This would mean that a number of pupils on placing requests

to Keith Primary (currently 14) would become entitled to funded transport. The 7 pupils who currently receive transport to Rothiemay Primary as an interim measure may lose this privilege and elect to move their young people to Keith Primary. This would impact the roll of Rothiemay Primary – with the risk it would reduce from a 3-class to a 2-class school, with an impact on the education of the young people there.

Option 4 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Rothiemay Primary School. There are currently pupils from the Crossroads catchment attending Rothiemay Primary. The majority are on placing requests who are not entitled to transport however funded transport is currently being provided as an interim measure due to the 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. The remaining 17 Crossroads pupils currently at Keith Primary and St Thomas RC Primary are likely to remain as out of zone, but were they all to change to the newly re-zoned Rothiemay – this would take Rothiemay to 96% of functional capacity and exceed functional capacity within 5 years.

Option 5 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Newmill Primary School. Currently none of the pupils zoned for Crossroads attends Newmill on a placing request. Newmill Primary is currently operating at 89% capacity – and could only accommodate 8 pupils from the Crossroads catchment.

Option 6 – Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School and Keith Primary School. This would follow the preference of the current parent body from Crossroads catchment; 7/24 attending Rothiemay Primary, 14/24 attending Keith Primary and 3/24 attending the non-contiguous St Thomas RC Primary in Keith.

Option 7 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School, Newmill Primary and Keith Primary School. This would further fragment an already dispersed community and run the risk of further placing requests year on year to keep friendship groups together. Currently none of the pupils zoned for Crossroads attends Newmill on a placing request.

Option 8 – Expand the catchment area to encompass more families with school-aged children, bringing Crossroads up to a sustainable school roll.

- Expansion West into the Newmill Primary Catchment (current roll 63) would risk reducing this school's roll – reducing it to 2 classes or even 1. This would have a negative impact on the educational provision for the young people remaining at Newmill Primary.
- Expansion North into Cullen Primary School Catchment. Although Cullen Primary has more pupils than Newmill on roll (102 at present), the southern part of the Cullen catchment is sparsely populated and expansion into the settlement of Deskford would mean that some pupils would then be zoned for an alternative secondary school (Buckie High).

- Expansion South East into the Rothiemay catchment area runs the same risk as expansion West into Newmill. Rothiemay Primary currently has 55 on roll (including 7 from Crossroads) and expanding the Crossroads catchment east would risk Rothiemay becoming 2 classes or more likely 1 class. This would have a negative impact on the educational provision for the young people remaining at Rothiemay Primary.
- Expansion South into the Keith Primary catchment encompasses a very sparsely populated area with few young people of primary age registered there. Expansion into this area would also run against the clear desire of parents in the south of the Grange community to send their young people to Keith Primary on placing requests (currently 14).
- Expansion North East into the Aberdeenshire catchment of Ordiquhill Primary could mean that some pupils would then be zoned for an alternative secondary school (Banff Academy) and see those children educated in another local authority.

It should be noted that other options may emerge during the formal consultation.

The desk top analysis of each of these options is set out in Appendix III.

The following options on the future of Crossroads Primary School would be recommended to go forward for consultation:

Option 1 - Re-open Crossroads PS

Option 2 – Continue to mothball Crossroads PS

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

Option 6 – Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone of the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School and Keith Primary School.

5. Conclusion

One of the options identified as part of the appraisal is to close Crossroads Primary School. This is currently considered to be the only viable option for the school; therefore, Moray Council must undertake a statutory consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a rural school there is a presumption against closure and Moray Council must ensure all other alternatives have been identified and robustly considered prior to undertaking any statutory consultation on this matter.

Appendices:

- I. A summary of comments gathered, and concerns raised during public engagement meetings
- II. School layout
- III. Options Appraisal (Desktop Analysis)

Appendix I - A summary of comments gathered, and concerns raised during public engagement meetings.

Many of the comments made during the engagement were about the processes used during the mothballing, e.g. around timescales, communication and the transition arrangements for the young people who were still on roll at Crossroads during the engagement around mothballing. Only comments relevant to the mothballing itself and the potential closure of Crossroads have been included in this summary.

Feedback was either provided directly at meetings, lengthy or written comments and questions received feedback generated by QIM subsequently.

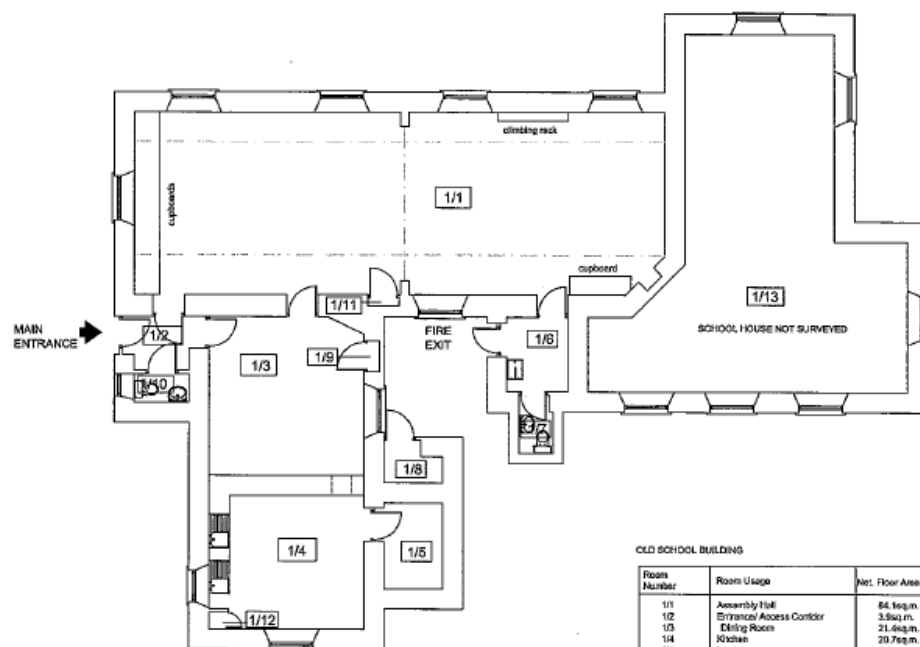
Date of Engagement	Audience	Outline/Comments	Notes/Response
21 st April 2022	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info to staff on fact finding to come with parents due to falling roll 	N/A
21 st April 2022	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here today to start fact finding exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roll is currently 10, 2 P7 heading to Keith Grammar so down to 8 ○ Also aware that 3 are moving house so potential in August for a roll of 5 pupils ○ P1 – nil ○ P2 – nil ○ P3 – one ○ P4 – two ○ P5 – one ○ P6 – nil ○ P7 – one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents were mainly resigned to this as they had seen it coming for some time as roll fell.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your thoughts, concerns, questions? • Any thoughts about another school? • Here to answer questions and gather information 	
23 rd May 2022	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll predicted to be 5 by August • 1:1 meetings offered • Decision to mothball not until term has started 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No uptake for offered 1:1 meetings
Apr/May 2023	Parent Feedback form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give building to community for wellbeing hub and charity • Concerns that the decision has already been made to close the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential for Community Asset Transfer is there if a decision is made to close the school in the future • A decision to close can only be made following statutory consultation and with the agreement of Education Scotland/Scottish Government.
10 th & 11 th May 2023	Public Meetings – online & in person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the short timespan between notification of mothballing and the 5 YP needing to make a decision on alternative school(s) • Concerns about rural schools not being promoted • Concerns about pupils within Rothiemay and Grange attending Aberdeenshire secondary schools and the impact this might have on roll • Concerns around the loss of community cohesion – eg through loss of fundraising activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescale was a concern – reduced due to election period requiring a pause. However there had been prior discussion with parents warning them that this might happen soon. • All schools have the same type of entry in Moray Council materials online. • Rothiemay and Crossroads both have split catchments for historic and geographical reasons with areas of the Rothiemay primary catchment being zoned for Aberdeenshire secondary schools and some areas of Grange being zoned for Ordiquhill primary in Aberdeenshire. • As only c.20% of local children attended Crossroads prior to mothballing due to parental choice, there have

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the travel time and road conditions to Rothiemay, particularly during bad weather. • Concerns that Rothiemay the only option as Keith and Newmill were both full. • Concerns about loss of access to playing field which has reverted to the farmer who owns it during mothballing 	<p>been limited opportunities for school events to promote social cohesion for some time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary re-zoning to Rothiemay was due to parental choice at the time. Other options that were closer utilising major roads (eg Keith) were offered at the time – and taken up for 2 young people (with supported transport) • Keith and Newmill both had places available. • Use is likely to be re-granted if the school were to reopen. The existing lease is between the community association and the landowner – with the school getting use of this space during school time. Local community may wish to investigate resuming use of this with the farmer/community association in the medium/long term if the school were to close or remain mothballed.
21st November 2023	Parent Session re Mothballing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern re inaccuracy in letter “no enrolments to P1” – there was one P1 request. • Building will have deteriorated as out of use. • Outdoor learning class donated to RPS not allowed being used • Request for community use of building if school closes. • Options “in the event of 16 children enrolling” requested • Options for parents now changing mind re new school (eg Newmill) • Options for rezoning raised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies where given and the correct data has been used in this options appraisal. • The building will have deteriorated as it is only being kept wind and watertight. That is why mothballing is possible for 3 years maximum. • Outdoor space is now in use. • Community Asset Process outlined and information sent on • Elected members would need to consider un-mothballing were this to happen – taking into account predicted future rolls. • Alternatives options followed up by QIM. • Re-zoning options outlined in this Options Appraisal

27th November 2023	Community Session re Mothballing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of 'promotion' of the school • Parents should be prevented from making placing requests out of the catchment • What happens when Keith & Newmill are at capacity • Is there a forecast for Crossroads? • Why do parents choose to request placing outwith Crossroads • Concerns about impact on building of heating being off • Concerns around power for Defibrillator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure equity and fairness, all schools have the same type of entry on Moray Council's web-page. • Parental choice is enshrined in policy and legislation. • Roll forecast for next 5 years do not show either alternative schools over capacity (KPS 70-80% of capacity, NPS, 52-90% capacity) and both are declining rolls. • Forecast is for sub-15 pupils over the next 5 years. This does not take into account the increasing proportion of parents taking up placing requests • Many reasons for choices including they want to put their children to a larger school, travelling to work easier to drop off, Keith brand new school, childcare opportunities in Keith. • Building issues are the reason mothballing for a maximum of 3 years. • Electricity will not be cut off as long as council have the building.
--------------------------	--	--	--

Appendix II – School layout

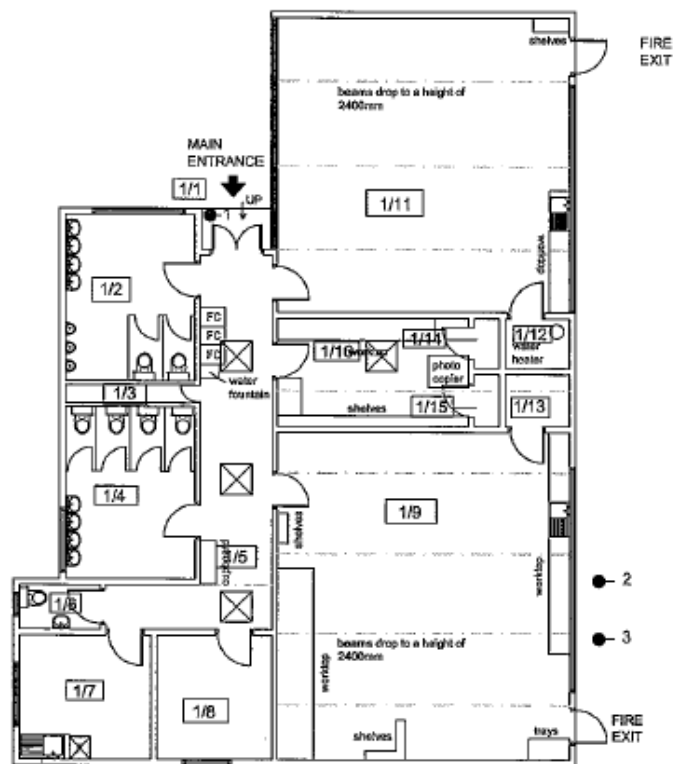


OLD SCHOOL FLOOR PLAN

OLD SCHOOL BUILDING

Room Number	Room Usage	Net. Floor Area	Ceiling Height approx.	Net. F Area minus fixed furniture	Max. Capacity No of children
1/1	Assembly Hall	84.5sq.m	4800mm	80.2sq.m.	53
1/2	Entrance/Access Corridor	3.5sq.m.	3090mm		
1/3	Dining Room	21.4sq.m.		21.4sq.m.	14
1/4	Kitchen	20.7sq.m.			
1/5	Larder	4.4sq.m.			
1/6	Cloakroom / Fire exit	4.5sq.m.			
1/7	Toilet	1.2sq.m.	2090mm		
1/8	Store	1.4sq.m.			
1/9	Cupboard	0.5sq.m.			
1/10	Toilet	1.2sq.m.			
1/11	Cupboard	0.4sq.m.			
1/12	Cupboard	0.5sq.m.			
1/13	School House	64sq.m.			

TOTAL NET. INTERNAL FLOOR AREA = Approx. 208.2sq.m.



NEW CLASSROOM BLOCK

Room Number	Room Usage	Net. Floor Area	Ceiling Height approx.	Net. F. Area taken food furniture	Max. Capacity No of children
1/1	External (asbestos only)				
1/2	Boys Toilet	13.1sq.m.	2400mm		
1/3	Service Duct	1.9sq.m.			
1/4	Girls Toilet	13.8sq.m.	2400mm		
1/5	Access Corridor	18.8sq.m.	2400 & 2340mm		
1/6	Toilet	2.2sq.m.	2360mm		
1/7	Staff Room	7.9sq.m.	2300mm		
1/8	Office	6.7sq.m.	2300mm		
1/9	Classroom 2	88.6sq.m.	A 3100mm	50.4sq.m.	33
1/10	Resource	22.5sq.m.	A 3100mm		
1/11	Classroom 1	62sq.m.	A 3100mm	55.3sq.m.	33
1/12	Store	0.7sq.m.	A 3100mm		
1/13	Store	0.7sq.m.	A 3100mm		
1/14	Store	1.9sq.m.	A 3100mm		
1/15	Store	1.9sq.m.	A 3100mm		

TOTAL NET. INTERNAL FLOOR AREA = 7sq approx. 1066sq.m.

NEW CLASSROOM BLOCK - FLOOR PLAN

ASBESTOS

Options Appraisal (Desktop Analysis)

In considering the options below, 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

Factors relating to each option are highlighted **green** where they are broadly positive, **red** where they are negative or **amber** where they are uncertain, marginal or contain an element of difficult to quantify risk.

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
1 – Re-open Crossroads	<p>May be an impetus for community to restore playing field</p> <p>De-fib will continue to be supported.</p> <p>Small number of YP would be schooled within their own community – around 20% of current catchment.</p> <p>Perception of some residents that school events are a key component of the community – although it is questionable how much that is correct with around 80% of YP in catchment already</p>	<p>80% of YP from the catchment would continue to be non-eligible for school transport due to placing requests outside zoned school [currently Rothiemay on a temporary basis].</p>	<p>Negative educational benefit due to very small roll – limiting options for groupwork, before and after school activities and childcare, social activities and stage partners for regular and frequent staff collaboration and moderation activities.</p>	<p>Crossroads primary is condition C/D for the majority of criteria – requiring considerable investment to bring it up to B.</p> <p>Increasing costs to bring school to Cat B for condition if required. £63,400 immediate cost on reopening with £339,426 over the first 5 years post reopening (based on Jan ‘23 costs – this will continue to increase). This amounts to a £67,885 cost <i>per annum</i>.</p> <p>Additional costs to run as a very small school are high (compared with <i>status quo</i>).</p>	<p>Negatives significantly outweigh positives</p> <p>To be retained for formal consultation.</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	<p>educated elsewhere prior to mothballing.</p> <p>Grange has a thriving public hall that hosts a increasing range of community events on a regular basis – these have never been held in the school. This may be impacted negatively by the re-opening of the school as an alternative venue.</p>			<p>Annual recurring cost (staffing, fuel, transport etc) of £130,777. This takes into account the rise in costs associated with the current alternative provision.</p> <p>Total additional annual cost adding in maintenance and upgrade costs (averaged over a 5-year period) of £198,662, based on 2023/4 costings, compared with <i>status quo</i>.</p> <p>Additionally, savings of £51,179 per annum would come into place if the school were to close after staff conservation is removed. If this is counted as a cost of reopening, this gives a grand total cost of £249,841 per annum.</p> <p>This projected cost will be replicated as a saving in all subsequent options.</p>	
2 - Do nothing – school remains mothballed	<p>Continued uncertainty.</p> <p>De-fib will continue to be supported.</p> <p>Playing field has reverted to agricultural use.</p>	80% of YP from the catchment would continue to be non-eligible for school transport due to placing requests.	Pupils will continue to benefit from education in suitable building with potential for socialisation, increased activities before and after school, groupwork opportunities and staff	<p>Building and systems therein would continue to deteriorate.</p> <p>Annual recurring operating saving (taking into account increased costs at new</p>	<p>Positives marginally outweigh negatives, although this is not a sustainable option.</p> <p>To be retained for formal consultation.</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	<p>All YP are schooled outwith their own immediate community [most by parental choice]</p>		<p>partners for frequent staff collaboration/moderation activities.</p>	<p>school and transport) of £130,777.</p> <p>Total annual saving (including upgrade costs) of £198,662 based on 2023/4 costings over a 5 year cycle.</p>	
<p>3 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Keith Primary School.</p>	<p>Uncertainty removed.</p> <p>All YP are schooled outwith their own immediate community [most by parental choice].</p> <p>De-fib may have to move to alternative location if CAT does not take place.</p> <p>Removal of minimally maintained building within the community [assuming it is taken over or sold]</p> <p>Closure would allow community to undertake a Community Asset Transfer and utilise building for community activities.</p> <p>Rezoning all YP to KPS, where the majority of local YP are currently schooled on placing requests may reduce fragmentation – with</p>	<p>YP currently schooled at KPS on placing requests (14) would gain supported transport.</p> <p>YP currently at RPS due to mothballing (3) would retain supported travel if they wished to continue in the currently in-zone school.</p> <p>Transport distance is the second shortest (by 0.2 miles) of the options.</p> <p>Environmental impact of 14 children being transported to KPS by their parents currently may be reduced as all of these would become eligible for bus transport.</p>	<p>Pupils will benefit from education in very modern building (Cat A for suitability and condition) with increased potential for socialisation, transition activities (pre and post primary), increased activities before and after school (local authority and private – eg Active Schools, Stagestars Scotland etc), groupwork and access to modern sports facilities on site.</p> <p>Opportunities and stage partners for frequent staff collaboration/moderation activities.</p> <p>Transition from ELC more effective as currently 6/7 (86%) of YP in catchment attending Nursery do so in Keith.</p>	<p>Potential safeguarding or increase in funding for KPS due to savings made by closure of CPS.</p> <p>KPS has more than enough capacity to absorb all of CPS – 88 -111 spaces available per year over the 10-year planning cycle.</p> <p>Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum [see option 1 for full breakdown]</p>	<p>Positives significantly outweigh negatives</p> <p>To be retained for formal consultation.</p> <p>Preferred option.</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	<p>all local families involved in social activities and fundraising for one or two schools rather than four.</p> <p>Pre and post-school childcare readily available in Keith (and not in Grange or Rothiemay)</p>	<p>Need to check on transport to RPS – do ALL YP from Grange currently (including previous placing requests) get free transport? (Lindsey)</p>			
<p>Option 4 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Rothiemay Primary School.</p>	<p>Uncertainty removed.</p> <p>Removal of minimally maintained building within the community [assuming it is taken over or sold]</p> <p>De-fib may have to move to alternative location if CAT does not take place.</p> <p>Closure would allow community to undertake a Community Asset Transfer and utilise building for community activities.</p> <p>Rezoning all YP to RPS, where the minority of local YP are currently schooled may retain fragmentation – with local families involved in social activities and fundraising for three schools.</p>	<p>YP currently schooled at KPS on placing requests (14) would remain ineligible for supported transport.</p> <p>Experience so far, via feedback from parents, is that transport to RPS can be difficult – especially in bad weather.</p> <p>Transport distance is the second longest of the options at 7.6 miles.</p>	<p>Pupils will experience education in a similar building (Cat C overall) to CPS.</p> <p>Increased potential for socialisation, limited or no before and after school options, increased groupwork opportunities and limited staff partners for regular and frequent collaboration and moderation activities.</p> <p>Rothiemay is another split catchment school with potential for peer groups to be split up at transition to secondary (or placing requests to a neighbouring authority to avoid this).</p>	<p>Potential safeguarding or increase in funding for RPS due to savings made by closure of CPS.</p> <p>RPS's ability to absorb all YP from CPS catchment is marginal at best (12-24 spaces per year over the 10-year planning cycle). If parents currently sending their children to KPS/St Thomas all elected to send their children to RPS as zoned school, it would exceed planning capacity of RPS (75), although functional capacity at RPS has been as high as 94 in the past.</p> <p>The available capacity at RPS is increasing beyond 2026.</p>	<p>Negatives and risks outweigh Positives</p> <p>This option will not be pursued through formal consultation</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	Pre and post-school childcare not readily available in Rothiemay.		<p>Transition arrangements and cross sector planning are more difficult in split catchment context.</p> <p>Potential for enhanced ELC collaboration as Rothiemay has a partner playgroup. However none of the current cohort of pre-school children attend this setting.</p>	Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum [see option 1 for full breakdown]	
Option 5 - Close Crossroads Primary School and rezone pupils to Newmill Primary School	<p>Uncertainty removed.</p> <p>Removal of minimally maintained building within the community [assuming it is taken over or sold]</p> <p>De-fib may have to move to alternative location if CAT does not take place.</p> <p>Closure would allow community to undertake a Community Asset Transfer and utilise building for community activities.</p> <p>Rezoning all YP to NPS, where the none of local YP are currently schooled may retain fragmentation – with local families continuing to</p>	<p>Transport distance is the shortest (by 0.2 miles) of the options at 3.9 miles however, this does involve deviation from the main A95 road back onto minor roads to get to Newmill..</p>	<p>Potential for enhanced ELC collaboration as NPS has a partner playgroup. However only 1 of the current cohort of pre-school children attend this setting (14%).</p> <p>Pupils will benefit from education in marginally better buildings, NPS Cat B for both condition and suitability, with increased potential for socialisation.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for more frequent staff collaboration/moderation activities,</p>	<p>NPS's ability to absorb all YP from CPS catchment is marginal at best (8-36 spaces over the 10-year planning cycle). If parents currently sending their children to KPS/St Thomas/RPS all elected to send their children to NPS as the zoned school it would exceed planning capacity of NPS (75), although functional capacity at NPS has been as high as 98 in the past.</p> <p>The available capacity at NPS is increasing beyond 2026.</p> <p>Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum [see option 1 for full breakdown]. This may be reduced slightly</p>	<p>Negatives and risks outweigh Positives</p> <p>This option will not be pursued through formal consultation</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	make placing requests, therefore involved in social activities and fundraising for four schools.			as transport costs may increase.	
Option 6 – Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School and Keith Primary School.	<p>Uncertainty removed.</p> <p>Removal of minimally maintained building within the community (assuming it is taken over or sold)</p> <p>De-fib may have to move to alternative location if CAT does not take place.</p> <p>Closure would allow community to undertake a Community Asset Transfer and utilise building for community activities.</p> <p>Splitting the catchment may increase fragmentation – with local families continuing to make placing requests in either direction (or beyond as present), therefore involved in social activities and fundraising for three schools.</p>	<p>There is a significant difference in transport distances (4.1 miles to Keith, 7.6 miles to Rothiemay) with a greater proportion of the journey to RPS being on minor roads.</p> <p>Parents currently attending RPS have mentioned issues around journey time and weather issues in relation to travel to RPS.</p> <p>Transport distance is the second shortest (by 0.2 miles) of the options.</p> <p>Environmental impact of 14 children being transported to KPS by their parents currently may be reduced as some or all of these would become eligible for bus transport.</p>	<p>Pupils will benefit from education in better buildings (KPS, Cat A for suitability and condition, RPS Cat C for condition, Cat B for suitability) with increased potential for socialisation (both).</p> <p>Those rezoned to KPS would see transition activities (pre and post primary), increased, activities before and after school (local authority and private – eg Active Schools, Stagestars Scotland etc), increased groupwork and access to modern sports facilities on site.</p> <p>Transition from ELC more effective for those rezoned to KPS as currently 6/7 (86%) of YP in catchment attending Nursery do so in Keith. None of the current catchment attend ELC settings in Rothiemay.</p>	<p>Splitting the catchment would overcome the outside chance that re-zoning to RPS <i>en-bloc</i> would bring to exceed the capacity of RPS.</p> <p>Increasing the catchment of RPS would reduce the marginal possibility of RPS reducing to a 2-class school over the current planning cycle (which could have a negative n impact on the education at RPS). However this possibility exists only for 2027 and 2028 and so is unlikely.</p> <p>Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum (see option 1 for full breakdown). This may be reduced slightly as transport costs may increase.</p>	<p>Negatives and outweigh positives. . There are a significant number of marginal points.</p> <p>To be retained for formal consultation.</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
Option 7 - Close Crossroads Primary School and split the catchment between Rothiemay Primary School, Newmill Primary and Keith Primary School.	<p>Removal of minimally maintained building within the community.</p> <p>De-fib may have to move to alternative location if CAT does not take place.</p> <p>Closure would allow community to undertake a Community Asset Transfer and utilise building for community activities.</p> <p>Splitting the catchment in three may increase fragmentation even more – with local families continuing to make placing requests in multiple directions, therefore involved in social activities and fundraising for four schools.</p>	<p>Varied transport options would now exist, and this would likely change from year to year given the dispersed nature of the catchment with the potential for YP to be criss-crossing the catchment on provided, or private transport.</p> <p>Some families of YP on placing requests currently ineligible for transport to KPS would gain funded transport on this scenario. However this may further fragment the community, as some may not.</p>	<p>Pupils will benefit from education in better buildings (KPS, Cat A for suitability and condition, RPS Cat C for condition, Cat B for suitability, NPS Cat B for both condition and suitability) with increased potential for socialisation. Transition activities for those re-zoned to KPS would be increased, activities before and after school (in and out of school – eg Active Schools, Stagestars Scotland etc), groupwork opportunities with staff stage partners for frequent staff collaboration/moderation activities.</p> <p>Transition from ELC more effective for those re-zoned to KPS as currently 6/7 (86%) of YP in catchment attending Nursery do so in Keith. None of the current catchment attend ELC settings in Rothiemay, only 1 (14%) attends ELC in Newmill.</p>	<p>None of the current catchment undertaking placing requests elect to send their children to NPS, even though it is the closest neighbour.</p> <p>Increasing the catchment of RPS would reduce the marginal possibility of RPS reducing to a 2-class school over the current planning cycle (which could have a negative impact on the education at RPS). However this possibility exists only for 2027 and 2028 and so is unlikely.</p> <p>Increasing the catchment of Newmill would reduce the marginal possibility of NPS reducing to a 2-class school over the current planning cycle (which could have a negative n impact on the education at NPS). However this possibility exists only after 2028 and would require a significant portion of the catchment to be re-zoned for NPS.</p> <p>Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum [see</p>	<p>Positives and Negatives are fairly balanced with marginal points or risks significant.</p> <p>This option will not be pursued through formal consultation</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
				option 1 for full breakdown]. This may be reduced as transport costs may increase.	
Option 8 – Expand the catchment area (various options outlined in Section 4.8)	<p>May be an impetus for community to restore playing field</p> <p>De-fib will continue to be supported.</p> <p>Building would be maintained by local authority.</p> <p>Small number of YP would be schooled within their own community – it is difficult to predict the proportion, given the high number of placing requests out (c. 80% of the potential roll) when the school was open.</p> <p>Perception of some residents that school events are a key component of the community – although how much that is experienced widely, with around 80% of YP in catchment already</p>	<p>Even more varied transport options would now exist, and this would likely change from year to year given the dispersed nature of the catchment and areas beyond the exiting catchment with the potential for YP to be criss-crossing the expanded catchment on provided, or private transport.</p> <p>Some families of YP on placing requests currently ineligible for transport to KPS would gain funded transport on this scenario. However this may further fragment the community, as some may not.</p> <p>There would be an increase in the number of transport routes</p>	<p>This is very variable depending on the area the catchment expands into.</p> <p>In all cases, young people would be re-zoned from a larger school to a smaller one unless the catchment was expanded far enough to make the school ‘donating’ young people vulnerable to a reduction in number of classes (with a knock-on impact on the children remaining in that school).</p> <p>Children from some of the donor catchments would all lose the benefits of heightened transition activities (particularly between ELC and Primary), activities before and after school (in and out of school – eg Active Schools, Stagestars Scotland etc), groupwork opportunities with staff</p>	<p>This could ensure there are sufficient young people within the catchment to provide a sustainable roll for a single, or even 2-class school. However experience over the last 5 or more years is that in-zone parents are choosing not to send their YP to Crossroads as a very small school. This may result in continued fragmentation and continued uncertainty if the roll remains well below the school-aged population of the enlarged catchment.</p> <p>Young people from neighbouring communities could find themselves zoned for a school that was outwith their own community – leading to placing requests to even more schools.</p> <p>CPS catchment may become split 3 ways in terms of secondary transition with YP zoned for secondary in Keith,</p>	<p>Negatives outweigh positives.</p> <p>This option will not be pursued through formal consultation</p>

Option	Community	Travel	Educational Benefit	Other	Outcome
	<p>educated elsewhere prior to mothballing, is unknown.</p> <p>Grange has a thriving public hall that hosts a increasing range of community events on a regular basis – these have never been held in the school. This may be impacted negatively by the re-opening of the school as an alternative venue.</p>	<p>required, or the routes would need to be lengthened. This would have negative environmental issues and/or issues on YPs experience – having to spend longer on a bus.</p> <p>It is likely that an increase in placing requests would lead to an increase in parental transport to school – increasing the environmental impact.</p>	<p>stage partners for frequent staff collaboration/moderation activities. The level of loss varies from school to school.</p>	<p>Buckie and Huntly, or for families to make placing request to alternative secondary schools to keep friendship-groups together</p> <p>The geography of the areas surrounding the catchment for CPS means that the catchment needs to be expanded significantly in any direction to add enough young people to make a significant difference.</p> <p>Projected saving of c. £249,841 per annum (see option 1 for full breakdown) This may be reduced significantly as transport costs may increase.</p>	

Note: Travel distances are based on school-school, so actual distances will vary depending on where families live in the catchment and where pick-up points may be located.