



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL, REASSIGNING ITS CATCHMENT AREA TO THAT OF KINLOCHBERVIE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal:

- To discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period.
- Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held at Achfary Primary School and Village Hall on 26th April 2016.
- The report from Education Scotland.

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

CONTENTS

1.0 Background

2.0 Consultation process

3.0 Review of the proposals following the consultation period

4.0 Responses Received

5.0 Summary of issues raised during the consultation period, and Highland Council's responses.

6.0 Summary of issues raised by Education Scotland, and Highland Council's Responses.

- 7.0 Community Use of Building
- 8.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies.
- 9.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure
- 10.0 Review of Catchment Issues
- 11.0 Procedure for Ministerial Call-in.
- 12.0 Legal issues
- 13.0 Financial Implications
- 14.0 Equality Impact Assessment
- 15.0 Conclusion
- 16.0 Recommendation

Appendices:

- Appendix 1** - The proposal document and appendices
- Appendix 2** - Minute of public meeting held in Achfary on the 26th April 2016
- Appendix 3** - Written submissions and questionnaires received
- Appendix 4** - Report from Education Scotland

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Adult Services Committee (ECAS), at its meeting on 17 March 2016, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School. The Proposal Paper also suggested an alternative option of re-assigning the Achfary catchment to that of Scourie Primary School.
- 1.2 **Appendix 1** is the original Proposal Paper and provides full details of the above proposal. The appendices to the original Proposal Paper are also attached.
- 1.3 Achfary Primary School has been “mothballed” since the end of session 2011-12, and current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of 2 by 2019-20. A roll of this size impedes the successful delivery of the curriculum and hampers social interaction opportunities for children.
- 1.4 Since July 2012 pupils from the Achfary Primary catchment have attended either Kinlochbervie Primary, 15 miles from Achfary Primary, or Scourie

Primary, 13.6 miles from Achfary Primary. These arrangements have been of benefit to the pupils at all 3 schools.

1.5 During last session there was 1 child within the P1-7 age in the Achfary catchment, who attended Kinlochbervie Primary.

1.6 The school has a planning capacity of 18. The notional school roll of 2 by 2019-20 would therefore represent 11% use of capacity.

1.7 Achfary Primary School is designated as a rural school under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In that context, the Council has given special regard to:

- any viable alternative to the closure proposal; alternatives were considered at Sections 3-6 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**) and have been reconsidered again in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 5 and 9 below.
- the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to (a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community. The effect on the local community was considered at Section 14 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**) and is further considered at Section 7 below, taking into account representations received during consultation.
- the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to;
- the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact; effects on school transport were considered at Section 12 of the Proposal Paper. (**Appendix 1**).

2.0 Consultation process

2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 11 April 2016 to Tuesday 24 May 2016. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils in the catchment area of Achfary Primary School, and parents of pupils attending Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All pupils attending Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary schools.
- (iii) Members of the UK and Scottish Parliaments for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (v) Staff of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) Kinlochbervie Community Council, and Scourie Community Council;

- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor.
- (x) The Care and Learning Alliance
- (xi) The Duke of Westminster Settlement Trust (local landowner)
- (xii) Members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership

2.3 The proposal document was also advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held in Achfary on the 26 April 2016. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page, and in the *Northern Times*. The minute of the meeting is at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Review of proposals following the consultation period

3.1 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meeting, officials reviewed the proposals.

3.2 The feedback from the consultation was considered by a range of Council officials. This ensured that the Council met the requirements of the 2010 Act.

3.3 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

4.0 Responses received

4.1 Teaching staff at Kinlochbervie and Scourie Schools sought the views of pupils (including any living within the Achfary catchment area) based on question set out in an age adapted questionnaire. A summary of the pupil responses is at **Appendix 3**.

4.2 A list of others who responded in writing during the public consultation is also at **Appendix 3**, along with copies of these responses

5.0 Issues raised during the consultation period

5.1 Three written responses were received in response to the consultation exercise. One of these was an 82-name petition from the Scourie area, supporting the closure of Achfary Primary but suggesting that the catchment be re-assigned to Scourie Primary rather than Kinlochbervie.

5.2 One of the other two written responses also supported the closure of Achfary whilst arguing for the catchment to be re-assigned to Scourie. The remaining response did not comment directly on the closure proposal, but again argued that in the event that Achfary closed, the catchment should be reassigned to Scourie rather Kinlochbervie.

5.3 The staff of Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primaries advise that the majority of their pupils support the closure of Achfary (see summaries at Appendix 3).

Two of the pupils at Scourie thought that Achfary should continue to be mothballed.

- 5.4 Seven of the nine Scourie pupils thought that the Achfary catchment should be re-zoned to the Scourie catchment. The pupils at Kinlochbervie felt that children from Achfary should have the choice of going to Kinlochbervie or Scourie.
- 5.5 As can be seen from **Appendix 2**, no person who attended the public meeting spoke at the meeting to oppose the proposed closure. On the contrary there was overwhelming support for the closure of Achfary School. There was again debate about the reassignment of the Achfary catchment, and all of those who spoke at the meeting were in favour of the Achfary catchment being re-assigned to Scourie.
- 5.6 The general community support for the closure of Achfary is based on the very low numbers of children in the catchment.
- 5.7 The argument put forward by pupils who supported keeping the school mothballed is summarised below together with the response from the Council.

Issue 1

Whilst there are not enough pupils to re-open Achfary at the moment, the village might get more families/children in the future.

Response 1

In drawing up its original proposals, the Council calculated estimates of the future roll, taking into account the number of pupils currently within the catchment, the local birth rate, and potential housebuilding. As set out in Section 4 of the Proposal Paper, projections indicate that if Achfary Primary were re-opened, it would be as a single teacher school with a very small roll.

- 5.8 The arguments put forward by the Scourie pupils, as to why pupils from Achfary should attend their school, are summarised below, with the Council's responses:

Issue 2

Scourie needs more pupils. There are hardly any pupils in Scourie School. Scourie has less pupils than Kinlochbervie.

Response 2

Highland Council agrees that Scourie Primary could benefit from gaining more pupils. However, the decision in this case must be based on the educational benefit to the pupils currently at Achfary, rather than the potential benefit to Scourie School.

Issue 3

Scourie has big classrooms, a canteen a big football pitch and a play area. There are lots of nice people at Scourie and the school is very safe. Scourie is a school with great teachers.

Response 3

Highland Council is clear that there would be educational benefits for the Achfary pupils in attending either Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primary Schools.

- 5.9 The summarised arguments put forward by those pupils who supported reassigning the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie, were as follows:

Issue 4

You can make more friends at Kinlochbervie and it's a nice school. So is Scourie but it's a small school, only 7 will be there soon. There are more classes and play areas at Kinlochbervie.

Response 4

See response 3.

- 5.10 The main arguments advanced by other respondents who favoured the reassignment of the Achfary catchment to Scourie are summarised below, together with the Council's response to each. The points noted cover those made at the public meeting as well as in writing.

Issue 5

Achfary is slightly closer to Scourie than to Kinlochbervie, and historically has linked more to Scourie. The transport route for schoolchildren is shorter. There are more family links between the communities of Achfary and Scourie.

Response 5

The Proposal paper acknowledged that Achfary is closer to Scourie than it is to Kinlochbervie. We note the strong view of the community of Scourie, regarding family links between Scourie and Achfary.

Issue 6

There are proposed developments at Scourie that will have a positive impact on the future school roll at Scourie. It is important though to maintain the viability of Scourie School in the intervening period, and re-assigning the Achfary catchment to Scourie could help with that.

If Kinlochbervie was chosen to receive the Achfary catchment, there would be fears locally about the future of Scourie Primary.

Although everyone is in agreement with the closure of Achfary, moving the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie feels like a nail in the coffin for Scourie Primary. Kinlochbervie should not be favoured over Scourie, or Durness for that matter. There is concern locally that the Council wants to create a single school in Kinlochbervie for the entire area. That would mean children from the other catchments having excessively long journeys to school, all the way from Kylesku in the south to Eriboll in the north. Unapool School was closed 15 or so years ago and with Achfary going too, the area will have lost 2 primary schools out of 5 in the last couple of decades.

Response 6

As noted at Response 2, the decision here must be based on maximising educational benefit to the pupils currently at Achfary, rather than any potential benefit to Scourie School.

Highland Council has no plans for further school mergers in the area, and the roll projections, locations and buildings issues in the other schools are not the same as at Achfary. Whilst no-one can say what may happen in future, under current legislation all school closure proposals are subject to the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, with the associated right of call-in by Scottish Ministers, and the potential of referral to the independent School Closures Review Panel.

Issue 7

Since Achfary was mothballed three years ago, any child living in the Achfary catchment have had Highland Council paid transport to Scourie, whereas, parents have had to fund their own transport to Kinlochbervie, so why the change of plan?

When Achfary was mothballed the single pupil in the catchment was told their catchment would henceforth be Scourie, so why there was there now doubt about the reassignment of the catchment? The then Head Master at Scourie was also told that he was in charge at Achfary. Kinlochbervie Primary does not have bigger numbers or better classrooms than Scourie. It is not better in any way. Both Kinlochbervie and Scourie are good schools.

Response 7

As previously mentioned, Highland Council is confident there would be educational benefits for the Achfary pupils in attending either Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primary Schools.

The arrangement made for school transport following the mothballing of Achfary was an informal one. As Achfary Primary is not closed, it still has a catchment. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that in 2012 the Council considered Scourie to be the more natural alternative school for pupils from Achfary.

Issue 8

Scourie nursery's roll has increased to seven children this session, showing that the number of children in Scourie primary will be growing.

Response 8

The increased number of nursery age children in Scourie, and the projected rising roll, were noted in the Proposal Paper.

Issue 9

Achfary Estate is linked with Kylestrome Estate and so keeping the children of these families in the same school would allow the children to mix with each other in and out of school helping to build a strong community bond.

Achfary, Scourie and Kylestrome already function as a strong working community.

Response 9

Highland Council agrees that there are strong employment and community links between Scourie and Achfary.

Issue 10

In the winter period the road to Scourie is better. If pupils from Achfary had to travel to Kinlochbervie, this could lead to poorer school attendance and affect grades.

Response 10

The B801 road to Kinlochbervie has the same gritting priority, as far as Kinlochbervie, as the A838. However, it is accepted that the road from Achfary to Scourie is shorter and has many fewer steep gradients.

Issue 11

The school is in the process of undergoing Highland Council reviews and due to this, have been working closely with inspectors to improve the school and all aspects of learning and development.

Response 11

See response 3.

Issue 12

Scourie school currently offers children a number of extra activities - violin lessons, chanter lessons, afterschool gardening club, craft club and chess club, there is also an outstanding school band which has won awards at music festivals on several occasions.

Response 12

See response 3.

Issue 13

As a community, Scourie can also offer children other activities including jujitsu, football club, table tennis and exercise class.

Response 13

This is noted. Other activities are of course available in Kinlochbervie.

Issue 14

Scourie community is in full support in keeping that village school as the catchment area for Achfary.

Response 14

Highland Council agrees that the consultation exercise identified strong support in Scourie for the Achfary catchment to be reallocated to Scourie Primary.

Issue 15

Why does the Proposal Paper make such an issue about the relative numbers at Scourie and Kinlochbervie? Until recently Scourie had larger numbers and that could happen again. It seems illogical to favour Kinlochbervie over Scourie on the basis of pupil roll.

Response 15

At present there is a notable difference between the two school rolls. However Education Scotland have noted that the Highland Council's own projections suggest the schools rolls of Scourie and Kinlochbervie will be closer in future. Their detailed comments are considered further in Sections 6 and 10 below.

- 5.11 It was also suggested that the Council should offer families in Achfary a choice of either Scourie or Kinlochbervie Primaries.

Issue 16

Parents from the Achfary catchment should be given the choice of sending their children to either Scourie or Kinlochbervie.

Response 16

Highland Council places all its communities within designated school catchments. Pupils enrol into the designated school for their home address, at both primary and secondary level. This system is necessary for the efficient planning of educational provision. If parents choose another school, then this must be by means of what we term a placing request. These are normally granted but can be refused where acceptance of the request would result in additional expenditure. Transport is not provided for children attending a school other than their catchment school.

Highland Council will apply the same principles to pupils from the Achfary, Scourie, and Kinlochbervie catchments as to other schools in Highland.

6.0 Summary of the issues raised by Education Scotland

- 6.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – **Appendix 4**.
- 6.2 In their report, Education Scotland recognise that the proposal offers the prospect of clear educational benefits to the children affected. The proposal will enable the few children from Achfary to learn with their peers and benefit from social interaction. They could access a more appropriate range of opportunities within the curriculum than would be the case at Achfary Primary School.
- 6.3 HM Inspectors further note that parents, children and staff who spoke with them in both Kinlochbervie Primary School and Scourie Primary School accepted the need to close Achfary Primary. Whilst regretting the loss of a local school, they saw merit in the educational benefits presented in The Highland Council's consultation document. HM Inspectors comment that the Council has given appropriate consideration to reasonable alternatives to closure, and conclude that population forecasts for the area do not make the alternatives viable or cost effective.
- 6.4 HM Inspectors noted however that stakeholders in Scourie Primary School disagreed with The Highland Council's proposal to reassign the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie Primary School. They were of the view that Achfary has more natural area links to Scourie including employment links. They were concerned about the area's population decline and the falling school roll in Scourie, and felt that The Highland Council's proposal could make it more difficult to attract families to the area and could therefore make

Scourie Primary School more vulnerable in the future. Achfary Primary School is located within the Scourie and District Community Council area. Members who spoke with HM Inspectors felt strongly that Achfary should be zoned to Scourie Primary School.

- 6.5 HM Inspectors noted that the Highland Council's case for re-assigning the catchment to Kinlochberrie is partly based on the fact that Kinlochberrie Primary School currently has 24 children on the roll, a larger roll than Scourie Primary School which has nine children, thus affording more opportunities for children to learn in age appropriate peer groups. HM Inspectors note however that the roll projection at Kinlochberrie is projected to fall whilst that at Scourie is projected to rise, and conclude that in the longer term, the educational benefits between assigning the Achfary Primary School catchment to either Kinlochberrie Primary School or Scourie Primary School are evenly balanced.
- 6.6 The Report from Education Scotland recommends that The Highland Council will need to consider the views provided by stakeholders at Scourie Primary School that Achfary Primary School catchment should be reassigned to Scourie Primary School.
- 6.7 The issues raised around the reassignment of catchment are addressed in Section 10 below.

7.0 Effects on the Community

- 7.1 Paragraphs 14.1 to 14.5 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**) sets out the Council's assessment of the effects of closure on the local community. The assessment was not challenged during consultation. It was suggested during the public meeting that, if the building reverted to the Estate owners, there might be a prospect of increased community use. Although there were not many people in the community, they would like to use the building, and if the school were closed the Estate might consider upgrading it.

8.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

- 8.1 Two alleged inaccuracies were raised in consultation, both at the public meeting (see Appendix 2). It is suggested that paragraph 10.2 of the Proposal Paper was incorrect in stating that only 3 children attended the pre-school nursery in Scourie when there were in fact 4. The figure of 3 was however correct at the time of drafting. Roll figures cannot ever be anything other than a snapshot at a particular point in time. Whilst Highland Council is happy to acknowledge that the nursery roll at Scourie had risen to 4 by the time of the public meeting, the Council does not accept there was an inaccuracy in the original paper. It should be noted that the Proposal Paper acknowledged that the nursery roll at Scourie was expected to increase to 7 August 2016.
- 8.2 It was suggested that paragraph 19.2 of the Proposal Paper was also inaccurate, in that it suggested funded school transport would be from Scourie to any other school. This was acknowledged as a typing error that should have referred to Achfary.

8.3 The Council has carefully considered the impact of this inaccuracy on the Proposal but is clear that it is nothing more than a typing error that does not represent a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal.

9.0 Further Review of Alternatives to Closure

9.1 Throughout the consultation the Council has had special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In particular, the Council has had special regard to the following:

- any viable alternative to the closure proposal;

Alternatives to closure were reviewed at Section 3 of the original proposal paper (**Appendix 1**). The consultation exercise did not identify any new alternatives for consideration. Having reconsidered each of the alternatives identified at Section 3 of **Appendix 1**, the Highland Council has concluded that the alternatives to closure would not deliver the educational benefits of the proposal. This view has been endorsed by HM Inspectors. The detailed reasons for the Council's view are set out in Section 11 of **Appendix 1**.

- the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to; (a) the sustainability of the community, (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community;

The potential community impact of the proposal was considered at Section 14 of the Proposal and is further considered at Section 7 above.

- the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular), (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities, (ii) any environmental impact, (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

The impact of the proposal on travel arrangements was considered at Section 12 and 19 of the original proposal paper. Since Achfary School has been mothballed since 2012, implementation of the proposal would not require the introduction of any different travelling arrangements for pupils or staff.

10.0 Further Review of Catchment Issues

10.1 The Council has carefully considered the arguments put forward in favour of re-assigning the Achfary catchment to that of Scourie Primary School. The issue is covered above at Responses 2-15.

- 10.2 Whilst the original proposal recommended re-assigning the Achfary catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School, the Proposal Paper also suggested an alternative option of re-assigning the Achfary catchment to that of Scourie Primary School. The Proposal Paper stated Highland Council's opinion that both Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primaries offer educational advantages in comparison with a re-opened Achfary Primary, and specifically sought the views of the local community on the best way to re-assign the catchment area of Achfary Primary School.
- 10.3 Taking into account the very strong views expressed by the parents and community of Scourie; the strong community links demonstrated between the two communities; the fact that Achfary is part of the Scourie and District Community Council area; and Education Scotland's conclusion that the educational benefits between assigning the Achfary Primary School catchment to either Kinlochbervie Primary School or Scourie Primary School are evenly balanced; Highland Council is persuaded that it would be more appropriate to transfer the Achfary School catchment to the Scourie Primary School catchment, in the event Achfary Primary School is closed.

11.0 Procedure for Call-in by the Scottish Ministers

- 11.1 As set out in The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Highland Council is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of its decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Paper and Consultation Report. The Scottish Ministers have an eight-week period from the date of that final decision on 15 December 2016 to decide if they will call-in the proposal. Within the first three weeks of that eight-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Therefore, anyone who wishes to make representations to the Scottish Ministers can do so until 5 January 2017. The Scottish Ministers will have until 9 February 2017 to take a decision on the call-in of the Closure Proposal.
- 11.2 Anyone wishing to make a representation to the Scottish Ministers requesting them to call-in a local authority decision to close a school is asked to email schoolclosures@gov.scot or to write to **School Infrastructure Unit, Learning Directorate, The Scottish Government, Area 2A South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ by 7 January 2015.**
- 11.3 Until the outcome of the eight week call-in process has been notified to Highland Council, it will not proceed to implement the Proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, it will be referred to a School Closure Review Panel.

12.0 Legal issues

- 12.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

12.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland, such education to be directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children or young persons to their fullest potential (Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000). As with all Council duties, the Council also has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value, and in securing best value the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). Each of the above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

13. Financial Implications

13.1 Advice on the financial implications of the proposal was issued with the Proposal Paper and can be found at **Appendix 1K**.

14.0 Equality Impact Assessment

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was issued with the proposal paper and can be found at **Appendix 1L**.

15.0 Conclusion

15.1 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Council's response detailed in sections 5 – 10 above.

15.2 Education Scotland staff visited Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primary Schools to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.

15.3 The Director of Care and Learning, on reviewing all of the submissions, the note of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; and having had special regard to alternatives to closure, to the community impact and to the impact of travelling arrangements; concludes that the proposal to close Achfary Primary School offers educational benefits and should be implemented.

15.4 In respect of the re-assignment of the Achfary catchment following closure, the Director of Care and Learning has taken note of the responses to the public consultation, the views expressed at the public meeting; and the Report by Education Scotland, and has concluded that the Council should adopt the alternative option identified in the Proposal Paper; to re-assign the Achfary catchment to the Scourie Primary School catchment, rather than the original recommendation to re-assign the catchment to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

16 Recommendation

- 16.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council approves the proposal to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School; re-assigning its catchment area to that of Scourie Primary School.

Bill Alexander
Director of Care and Learning
26 September 2016

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

The proposal is to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A PROPOSAL PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

The Highland Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process:

- To discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School. (Maps of the current catchment areas are at **Appendices A and Ai**). For the avoidance of doubt, any reference in this document to Achfary Primary Schools should be taken as a reference to both the primary and nursery classes.
- An alternative option would be to re-assign the catchment area to Scourie Primary School. (A map of the current catchment area is at **Appendix Aii**).
- The proposed changes, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures.
-

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 Achfary Primary School is a 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 special regard required for rural school closures. The Council has considered the demographic projections for the area and the school roll projections for Achfary Primary (see Section 4 below); has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 5 and 6 below); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 14 below) and to the impact of differing travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Achfary catchment (Sections 12 and 19 below). The sole P1-7 pupil presently in the catchment already attends Kinlochbervie Primary.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:

- No children have attended Achfary Primary School since the end of session 2011-12;
- Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of 2 by 2019-20;
- A school roll of this size provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence (details below) and;
- A school roll of 2 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.

Examination of Alternatives

- 3.1 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 Achfary Primary School, either with its current catchment area or an extended catchment area, or;
 - to continue with the current “mothballing” arrangement.
- 3.2 In considering the re-opening of the school, the Council has investigated the long-term roll projections as well as demographic information (See Section 4 below).
- 3.4 Were Achfary Primary to be re-opened, it would most likely be under an alternative management arrangement under which the school was managed as part of a “cluster” arrangement with other schools within the ASG. However, alternative management arrangements would not address the wider population issues within the Achfary area.
- 3.5 There has been no significant rise to the school age population of Achfary since the school was mothballed in 2012.
- 3.6 The current proposal follows informal discussions between Highland Council officials; local elected members and local representatives. Informal discussions with the latter were held as follows:
- Scourie Primary School Parent Council (Chairperson) (25 January 2016)
 - Scourie Community Council (25 January 2016)
 - Kinlochbervie Primary School Parent Council (Chairperson) (26 January 2016)
 - Kinlochbervie Community Council (26 January 2016)
 - Reay Forest Estate (25 and 28 January 2016)
- 3.7 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required on the most appropriate way to re-zone the Achfary catchment. Further discussion on this can be found at Section 16 below.
- 3.8 The detail of the Council’s consideration of the alternatives is set out throughout this proposal paper and its appendices. A brief summary is at **Appendix B.**

Re-Opening of Achfary Primary School with Current Catchment Area

- 4.1 There is currently one pupil of P1-7 age (P6) living within the catchment area of the school, with 1 pupil who would be of nursery age (N3) in August 2016. There is 1 further child of pre-nursery age within the catchment (all figures as at February 2016).
- 4.2 The above figures suggest that, were Achfary School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the P1-7 roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be:
- 2016-17 - 1
2017-18 - 0
2018-19 - 1
2019-20 - 2
- 4.3 The population living in the catchment fell by 40% (from 64 to 40) between 2001 and 2011 and the population of the primary catchment is older than the Highland average with only 6% aged 16 to 29 and 17% aged 30 to 44 (Highland 15% and 19% respectively). Analysis of the age of females living in the area using fertility rates for Sutherland overall suggests that we might expect to see an average of around 0.3 births per year: the recent historic average has been below this but with an increase in the last four years.
- 4.4 The long term roll at Achfary is probably in the region of 2 to 3 pupils albeit with year to year fluctuations around these figures. These roll projections indicate that if Achfary Primary were re-opened, it would be as a single teacher school with a very small roll. Highland Council considers that these circumstances present significant impediments to learning and teaching, particularly in terms of the requirements of the current curriculum. Further detail is provided at Section 11.
- 4.5 As previously stated, the school has not been operational since July 2012. No placing requests in or out of Achfary Primary School were recorded in the two sessions prior to mothballing (2010-11 and 2011-12).
- 4.6 If the school were to re-open, the potential pupils would have shorter journey times to school than they do at present. Further details on travel journeys to school are provide at Sections 12 and 16 below.

Re-Opening of Achfary Primary School with Expanded Catchment Area

- 5.1 The catchment area for Achfary PS abuts those of four other schools – Scourie, Kinlochbervie Primary, Altnaharra, and Lairg. All four are themselves rural schools. The roll at Scourie Primary is projected to fall to 9 next session before recovering in the longer term, whilst that of Kinlochbervie Primary is projected to remain fairly steady, at around 18-20 pupils in the longer term. The roll at Altnaharra Primary is due to fall to 3 in August 2016 and to remain at 2-3 for the foreseeable future. Any expansion of the Achfary catchment at the expense of the catchments of these 3 rural schools risks undermining the future of these schools, as well as increasing travel distances for pupils without increasing the roll at Achfary to a viable number.

- 5.2 Lairg Primary, whilst also a rural school, has a current roll of 40 and is projected to experience a rising roll in future years. Whilst there are a scattering of properties in the Lairg catchment that could, on the basis of geography, be considered for inclusion in the Achfary catchment (e.g. Corrykinloch and the Overscaig House Hotel) there are no children currently at any of these properties. The very small number of houses under discussion would make no significant difference to the future roll at Achfary. Furthermore, any proposal to alter the catchment area of Lairg Primary would require a statutory consultation with the school's parents, who would be likely to oppose any suggestion that they perceived as undermining the roll at Lairg.
- 5.3 A map of the Lairg Primary School catchment is at **Appendix C**. Roll projections for Altnaharra, Kinlochbervie, Lairg and Scourie Primaries are at **Appendix D - Diii**.

Continuation of "Mothballing"

- 6.1 Although it would be possible to continue with the current "mothballing" arrangement, Highland Council does not consider that that would represent the best option for the taxpayer or the community. "Mothballing" would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Current school transport arrangements would not be affected by a continuation of mothballing.
- 6.4 A continuation of mothballing would have no impact on the community. Currently the mothballed building is used for ad hoc community events.

General Background

- 7.1 This proposal is advanced within the wider context of demographic change in the area. Between 2001 and 2011 (Census figures) the population of Highland grew by 11% but the population of the Kinlochbervie High ASG area fell by 6%. During this period the secondary school roll fell from 94 in 2001 to 49 during the current session. The population of the Kinlochbervie ASG area is older than the Highland average with 11% aged 16 to 29 and 16% aged 30 to 44 (Highland 15% and 19% respectively).

The birth rate (the true birth rate measured as births per year per 1,000 women aged X years) tends to be close to the Highland average.

- 7.2 The reference in the above paragraph to "...per 1,000 woman aged X years" is included because there is a different expected birth rate for women depending on their age. For example the expected birth rate for a woman aged 25 is higher than for a women aged 45. The Council has looked at the ages of each

woman in the area and applied the expected rate to each before adding them together to come up with the final figure.

7.3 The consultation process for this proposal is set out in detail at **Appendix E**.

Current Details – Achfary Primary School

8.1 Achfary Primary is located in Reay Forest, on the A838 road. Its catchment area extends from Laxford Bridge to just beyond Merkland Lodge.

8.2 The school building at Achfary is accommodated within the village hall, which is itself leased by Highland Council from the local estate. The main classroom is located in a room off the main hall, and the main hall itself was used for PE. The school has the use of another room off the main hall, and of an outside area.

8.3 The school has a permanent capacity of 18. Based on the permanent capacity available, the notional 2019-20 roll of 2 pupils would represent 11% use of capacity.

8.4 The Highland Council assesses all of its schools for Suitability and Condition, in line with the Scottish Government's School Estate Management guidelines. Schools are assessed on a scale with the ratings "A" (good) "B" (satisfactory), "C" (poor) and "D" (bad). Achfary Primary School is currently rated as "C" for educational suitability and "C" for building condition.

8.5 The number of pupils within the catchment area entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.

8.6 The most recent HMIE report was published in January 2008. **A copy is at Appendix F.**

8.7 In recent years Highland Council has sought to manage its smaller primary schools through "cluster" arrangements with other local schools. Were the school to re-open as part of a cluster, the staffing entitlements, as per the Council's Devolved School Management policy are as follows;

Associate (Cluster) Head Teacher
Unpromoted Teachers – 1.00 FTE
Class Contact Time Teacher 2.5 hours per week
Clerical Assistant – 16 hours per week

A Cleaning Operative would also be employed at around 6.25 hours per week.

When the school was last in operation meals were cooked and served onsite and a Cook HC3 was employed for 20 hours per week. In the event the school were re-opened, it is likely meals would be cooked off site and transported to Achfary.

8.8 Were the school to re-open, school transport would be provided for the pupils who would be enrolled from 2018-19 onwards.

- 8.9 Annual Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the Achfary School building are estimated at 50.4 tonnes, along with annual Carbon Monoxide (CO) emissions of 0.063 tonnes.

Current Details – Kinlochbervie Primary

- 9.1 Kinlochbervie Primary School is located within the village of the same name in north-west Sutherland. The school has three classrooms, one of which is a dedicated music and art room; a Learning Support room; and a general purpose room. The playground has features such as a garden area, a rocky hill, and painted games. The school is able to make use of the gym hall in the adjoining High School for Physical Education and any events which require a large indoor space. In addition, there is a modern village hall just along the road where the school can put on plays, workshops, etc.
- 9.2 At the time of the 2015-16 school session census, the school had 17 pupils in P1-7, although numbers have since increased and the roll was 23 as at February 2016. A pre-school partner centre is managed by the Care and Learning Alliance, delivering the pre-school curriculum on behalf of Highland Council. The projected roll suggests the numbers will decline slightly over the next few years before settling at around 18-20.

2016-17 - 24
2017-18 - 23
2018-19 - 21
2019-20 - 19
2020-21 - 19
2021-22 - 18
2022-23 - 18
2023-24 - 17
2024-25 - 16
2025-26 - 18
2026-27 - 19
2027-28 - 19
2028-29 - 20
2029-30 - 20

There are currently 6 children in the CALA Nursery. The nursery roll is expected to be 4 in August 2016.

- 9.3 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2010-11 to 2014-15) there has been 1 placing request to join Kinlochbervie Primary. 1 placing request has also been made to leave Kinlochbervie Primary.
- 9.4 The population living in the catchment fell by 15% between 2001 and 2011 and the population of the primary catchment is older than the Highland average with 11% aged 16 to 29 and 14% aged 30 to 44 (Highland 15% and 19% respectively). Analysis of the age of females living in the area using fertility rates for Sutherland overall suggests that we might expect to see an average of around 2.7 births per year: the recent historic average has been slightly below this.

- 9.5 The school has a permanent capacity of 50. The expected roll of 24 in August 2016 would therefore represent 48% use of capacity.
- 9.6 Kinlochbervie Primary is currently assessed as “B” for Suitability and “B” for Condition. Future investment need within the school will be assessed as part of the Council’s capital programme and maintenance programmes, and based on the ‘core facts’ of condition, suitability and sufficiency.
- 9.7 The number entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.
- 9.8 The year group numbers expected for August 2016 are as follows:
- P1 – 4
 - P2 – 2
 - P3 – 4
 - P4 – 2
 - P5 – 5
 - P6 – 3
 - P7 – 4
- 9.9 The most recent HMIE report was published in February 2010. A copy is at **Appendix G**.
- 9.10 The 2015-16 staffing structure is as follows;
- Associate Head Teacher, Kinlochbervie High and Primary Schools, and Durness Primary – 1.00FTE
Unpromoted Teachers – 2.00 FTE
Class Contact Time Teachers – 5 hours per week
Clerical Assistant/General Auxiliary – 17 hours per week
- In addition, ASN teaching and non-teaching staff are allocated annually to the school, to meet assessed levels of need.
- The Catering and Cleaning Service employs a Cleaning Operative HC2 at 10.50 hours per week. Meals are provided as part of the shared campus with Kinlochbervie High, and catering staff are employed for both schools.
- 9.11 At present, 2 school transport routes operate to Kinlochbervie Primary School, transporting a total of 8 school pupils. Currently therefore, approximately 35% of the pupil population are in receipt of school transport.
- 9.12 Annual CO₂ emissions from the shared campus for Kinlochbervie High and Kinlochbervie Primary are estimated at just under 771 tonnes, along with 0.963 tonnes of annual CO emissions. It is not possible to split the emissions between the primary and secondary schools, but in any case the figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Achfary Primary School.
- 9.13 As the single pupil from the Achfary catchment area currently attends Kinlochbervie Primary, no adverse effects for Kinlochbervie Primary are expected to arise from a decision to close Achfary.

Current Details – Scourie Primary

- 10.1 Scourie Primary School is located in northwest Sutherland. The catchment area stretches from Kylesku to the south shore of Loch Laxford.
- 10.2 At the time of the 2015-16 school session census, the school had 17 pupils in P1-7, although the roll was 16 as at February 2016. There is a P1-5 class with 9 pupils and a P5-7 class with 7 pupils. A pre-school partner centre is managed by the Care and Learning Alliance, delivering the pre-school curriculum on behalf of Highland Council. The projected roll suggests the numbers will fall sharply in August before making a gradual recovery in future years.

2016-17 - 9
2017-18 - 12
2018-19 - 11
2019-20 - 12
2020-21 - 13
2021-22 - 14
2022-23 - 16
2023-24 - 20
2024-25 - 19
2025-26 - 18
2026-27 - 19
2027-28 - 19
2028-29 - 20
2029-30 - 20

There are currently 3 children in the CALA Nursery. The nursery roll is expected to increase to 7 in August 2016.

- 10.3 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2010-11 to 2014-15) there has been 1 placing request for pupils from other areas to join Scourie Primary. 1 placing request has also been made to leave Scourie Primary.
- 10.4 The population living in the catchment increased by 4% between 2001 and 2011 and the population of the primary catchment is slightly older than the Highland average with 15% aged 16 to 29 and 15% aged 30 to 44 (Highland 15% and 19% respectively). Analysis of the age of females living in the area using fertility rates for Sutherland overall suggests that we might expect to see an average of around 1 birth per year: the recent historic average has been close to this.
- 10.5 The school has a permanent capacity of 48. The expected August 2016 roll of 9 pupils therefore represents 18% use of capacity.
- 10.6 Scourie Primary is currently assessed as “C” for Suitability and “C” for Condition. Future investment need within the school will be assessed as part of the Council’s capital programme and maintenance programmes, and based on the ‘core facts’ of condition, suitability and sufficiency.
- 10.7 The number entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.

10.8 The year group numbers for August 2015 are as follows:

P1 - 1
P2 - 1
P3 - 1
P4 - 1
P5 - 5
P6 - 1
P7 - 7

10.9 The most recent HMle report was published in February 2010. A copy is at **Appendix H**.

10.10 The school's 2015-16 staffing structure is as follows;

Head Teacher, – 1.00FTE
Unpromoted Teachers – 1.3 FTE
Class Contact Time Teachers – 5 hours per week
Clerical Assistant/General Auxiliary – 17 hours per week

In addition, ASN teaching and non-teaching staff are allocated annually to the school, to meet assessed levels of need.

10.11 The Catering and Cleaning Service employs a Cleaning Operative HC2 at 8.75 hours per week, and a Cook HC3 at 23.75 hours per week.

10.12 A single school transport route currently operates to Scourie Primary, transporting 3 pupils. Therefore approximately 19% of the pupil population are in receipt of school transport.

10.13 Annual CO₂ emissions from Scourie Primary School building are estimated at 64 tonnes, along with 0.08 tonnes of annual CO emissions. This figure would not be affected by the formal closure of Achfary Primary School.

10.14 As the single pupil from the Achfary catchment area currently attends Kinlochbervie Primary, the proposed closure is not expected to have any adverse effect on Scourie Primary.

Educational Benefits

11.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.

11.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the above indicators in reviewing its' school estate:

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group.
3. Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art.

4. Pupils with Additional Support Needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting.
 5. Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (primary) although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural Council area such as Highland.
 6. School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends.
 7. School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution.
 8. Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented.
 9. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility.
 10. The implications of school location to local communities should be considered.
 11. Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built up community.
- 11.3 It is Highland Council's view that children from the Achfary catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at the larger neighbouring schools. Formalising the current arrangements would provide a number of such benefits, judged against the Highland criteria set out above, and in particular those at points, 2, 3, 4 and 9.
- 11.4 Pupils at both Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools regularly work in co-operative learning groups of various sizes, sometimes as a whole school group and sometimes in groups of mixed ages and abilities. A roll of 2/3, of varying ages, such as that if Achfary Primary re-opened, would mean that the groups would not only be limited in size but also static, since there would be no possibility of changing the membership of learning groups. A roll of 2/3 would limit the variety of skills that pupils could bring to the groups, and there would be a smaller range of work to use in terms of sharing standards.
- 11.5 Working with others across a wide range of settings is one of the core elements of the school curriculum. This includes planning and carrying out projects in small groups, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and being ready and willing to learn from and with others. Working with others also plays a part in the development of leadership skills, which become increasingly important to pupils as they move through their school years and beyond school education into adulthood.
- 11.6 As part of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce the aim is to develop increased awareness of the world of work, social skills and employability skills, including team working, leadership and working with others. Such knowledge and understanding and skills acquisition would very much benefit from discussions and dialogue with peers of the same age/stage
- 11.7 It is self-evident that a total school roll of 2 or 3 pupils at varying ages severely restricts opportunities for team sports and other active recreational activities. This applies even to individual sports, where successful learning of skills is helped by talking and sharing of experiences. It further applies to the health and wellbeing element of the curriculum which involves discussion between pupils about health lifestyle choices. Whilst these problems can be overcome

by taking the pupils to participate in activities in neighbouring schools, that in itself involves time out of school in travelling.

- 11.8 As with sports, the larger rolls at Kinlochbervie and Scourie provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. Primary schools within the Kinlochbervie ASG host a visiting Art specialist, Strings tutor, Chanter tutor and a Kodály Voice tutor, all of whom engage in whole school and whole class pieces.
- 11.9 Schools in the Kinlochbervie ASG are also participating in the YUNGA (United Nations Youth Award), a programme aimed at getting young people involved in social and environmental issues, and which involves a substantial degree of co-operative work.
- 11.10 Larger pupil numbers also provide more opportunities for after school activities. Scourie Primary currently runs an after school Craft Club, and Gardening Club, whilst Kinlochbervie Primary has a multi-activity after-school club and is planning to set up clubs in Computing, and Gardening.
- 11.11 The level to which pupils are able to become skilled in social interaction will depend to an extent on the opportunities afforded to them. The forging of close friendships and the development of self-esteem is enhanced by each pupil being enabled to be part of an age appropriate peer group of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.
- 11.12 In summary, pupils from the community of Achfary have derived a range of positive educational benefits from the mothballing of Achfary Primary, and wider opportunities than if they had attended Achfary Primary.
- 11.13 As the pupil from the Achfary catchment currently attends Kinlochbervie Primary, no adverse effects for that pupil are expected to arise from the merger.

Effects on School Transport

- 12.1 During the 2015-16 session, one P1-7 pupil will be travelling from the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie Primary. This pupil travels on the existing transport from Achfary to Kinlochbervie High, and consequently there is no current additional cost to the Council.
- 12.2 The fact that Achfary School is currently mothballed means that the sole P1-7 pupil will not experience any differing travel arrangements as a result of formal closure
- 12.3 When comparing the scenarios of a re-opened Achfary Primary to its current mothballed status or to formal closure, it is recognised that the larger merged school implies an increase in the number of pupils entitled to school transport compared to the number who could have otherwise walked or cycled to school, and the occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to/from school during the school day, should they require to do so.

- 12.4 As the sole current pupil travels on existing transport, there are no additional greenhouse gas emissions from school transport as a result of the mothballing or closure of Achfary Primary.
- 12.5 Highland Council is not aware of any days in the most recent winter, in which the education of the Achfary pupil was disrupted due to unavailability of school transport in bad weather.
- 12.6 Formal closure of Achfary Primary does raise the possibility of increased travel distances for children in the catchment who will be aged for school in future, and this issue is discussed further in section 19 below.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 13.1 As the school is already “mothballed” there will be no impact on school management arrangements at Kinlochbervie or Scourie from a formal closure of Achfary Primary School.
- 13.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements.
- 13.3 The staffing implications of re-opening Achfary Primary School are set out at Paragraph 7.10 above, whilst the financial implications are set out at Section 14 below, and the associated **Appendix I**.

Effect on the Local Community

- 14.1 The community of Achfary is very closely linked to the Reay Forest Estate, which currently provides almost all the employment opportunities within Achfary itself.
- 14.2 The building is currently used for community events such as ceilidhs and film nights, and since the school has been mothballed has also been used regularly by the Estate for staff meetings and other events which were previously not possible.
- 14.3 As Highland Council does not own the Achfary School building, the lease between Highland Council and the Estate would likely be terminated in the event of the closure proceeding. If so the future use of the building will be a matter for the local Estate. The Estate has advised that they would continue using the hall as a community facility for the foreseeable future, and would additionally look to increase the number of community events held there.
- 14.4 Paragraph 4.5 above explains that the population of the catchment fell by 40% between 2001 and 2011, during a period when the school was open. Past analyses of rural locations in Highland that have experienced school closures has established no clear relationship between school closures and population patterns.
- 14.5 The Report of the Scottish Government’s Commission on Rural Education, published in 2013, found a number of examples of communities which continued to depopulate despite the presence of a school. The Commission’s

review of the scientific and other literature on school closures found there was a lack of robust evidence on how pre-school, childcare and school proximity (and freedom from threat of closure) links to the sustainability of communities.

Financial Consequences

- 15.1 The Table at **Appendix I** sets out the Highland Council's assessment of the Financial Implications of the proposed merger.

Catchment Areas

- 16.1 The distance and driving time between Achfary Primary School and Kinlochbervie Primary School is given as 15 miles and 27 minutes (source: Google Maps) whilst the same source gives the distance and driving time from Achfary Primary to Scourie Primary as 13.6 miles and 25 minutes.
- 16.2 Achfary Primary School is located within the Scourie Community Council area.
- 16.3 The building at Kinlochbervie Primary has a higher score for Suitability than the building at Scourie Primary.
- 16.4 Although Scourie Primary School is marginally closer to Achfary than Kinlochbervie Primary, in the medium term the roll projections are less certain. The larger pupil and staff numbers anticipated for Kinlochbervie Primary offer more opportunities for pupils to be part of age appropriate peer groups, and for staff to be part of a larger in-school professional network, than would be the case at Achfary Primary. Furthermore, the higher standard of accommodation at Kinlochbervie offers educational advantages over that at Scourie.
- 16.5 For the above reasons, Highland Council recommends that the Achfary PS area is re-assigned to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.
- 16.6 Nevertheless, it remains Highland Council's opinion that both Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primaries offer educational advantages in comparison with a re-opened Achfary Primary.
- 16.7 Highland Council would welcome the community's views on the best way to re-assign the catchment area of Achfary Primary School.
- 16.8 Whichever decision is taken with respect to catchment areas, existing pupils will not be required to change schools and will continue to qualify for school transport. This will also apply to any younger siblings of such pupils, provided they remain at the same primary school.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 17.1 A preliminary EQIA assessment is at **Appendix J**.

Rural Impact Assessment

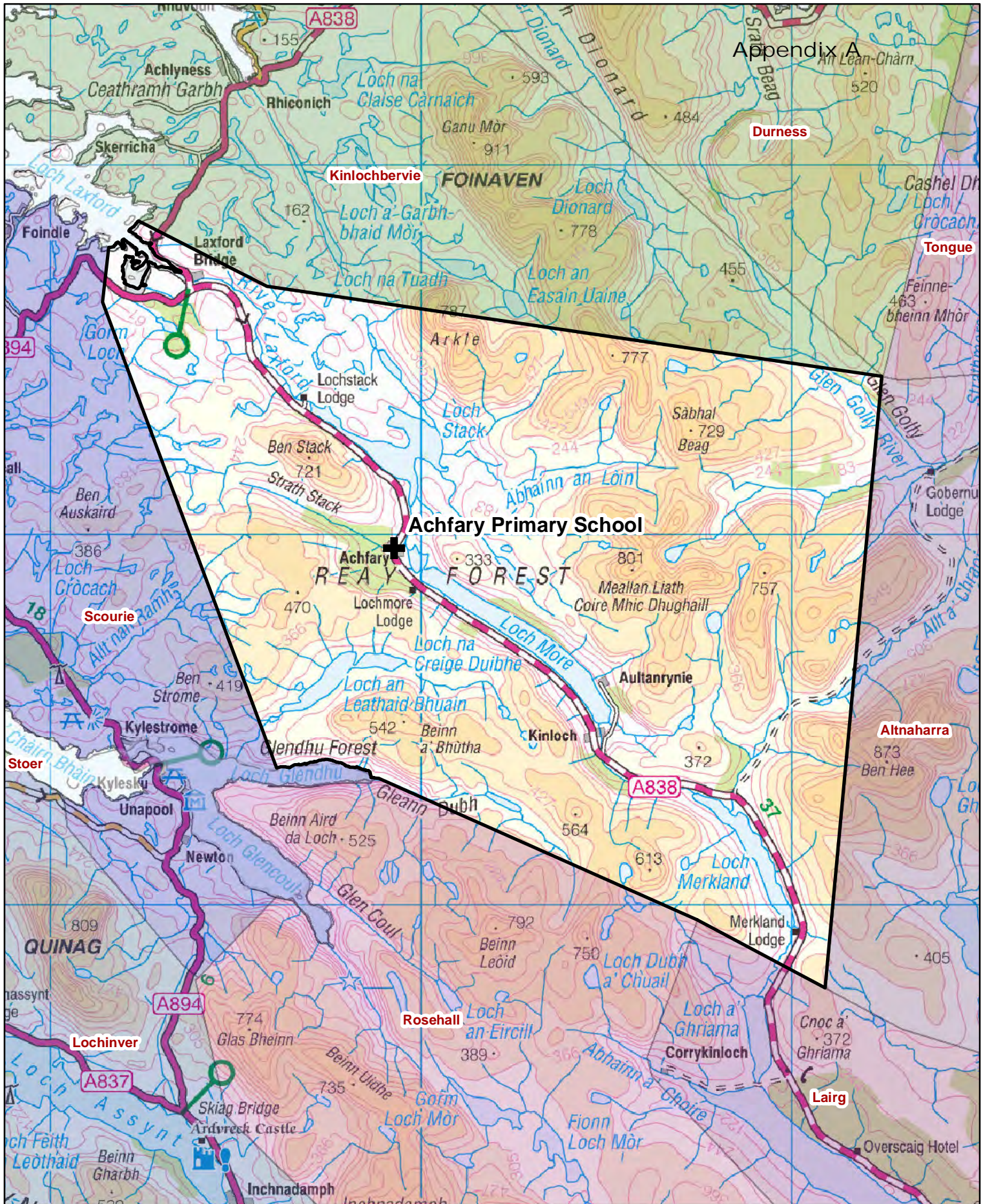
- 18.1 A preliminary Rural Impact Assessment is at **Appendix K**.

Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 19.1 The main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from Achfary to either Scourie or Kinlochbervie, details of which are provided above. However, as the school has been mothballed since 2012, the single current pupil is already making the journey to Kinlochbervie. The population in this area is accustomed to making long journeys to access things that people in urban areas take for granted.
- 19.2 Funded school transport will be provided to P1-7 pupils from Scourie attending whichever school the catchment is re-assigned to.
- 19.3 The pre-school children in the Achfary catchment area live at Merkland Cottage, at the eastern edge of the catchment. One pupil has registered for pre-school education in Kinlochbervie for August 2016. The distance and journey time from their home to Achfary Primary is 10.4 miles/19 minutes and that to Kinlochbervie Primary is 25.3 miles/46 minutes (source: Google maps). Although this journey time is undoubtedly an adverse effect, this must be balanced against the adverse educational effects that would arise from a child having to attend pre-school nursery on their own and having no peer group. The geography of Highland means that long journey times are not unknown even for such young children.
- 19.4 In overall terms, the adverse effects arising from the additional travelling time for pupils must be balanced against the educational benefits that will arise for pupils set out at section 11 above.

Recommendation

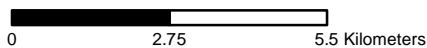
- 20.1 In considering the future of Achfary Primary School, the Authority has had special regard to viable alternatives to closure, to the likely effect on the community, and to the likely effect of different travelling arrangements arising from the proposal. Prior to consultation, informal discussions on these issues were held with a range of with local community representatives. The Council's detailed consideration of each issue is set out above. The Authority concludes that the closure may have a beneficial effect on the community, in providing opportunities for the building to be developed for community use. We further conclude that the likely long term roll of Achfary Primary means there are clear educational benefits to closure and no viable alternatives to closure. Closure will have no effect on the current travelling arrangements for the sole P1-7 pupil, and although adverse effects from travel do potentially arise for future pupils, these must be balanced against the educational and community benefits identified. Taking all of the above into account Highland Council recommends that Achfary Primary School, currently "mothballed," is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Kinlochbervie Primary.
- 20.2 This proposal paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report, and the submissions received, will be presented to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee of the Highland Council.



Achfary Primary School

**Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013**

1:132,000



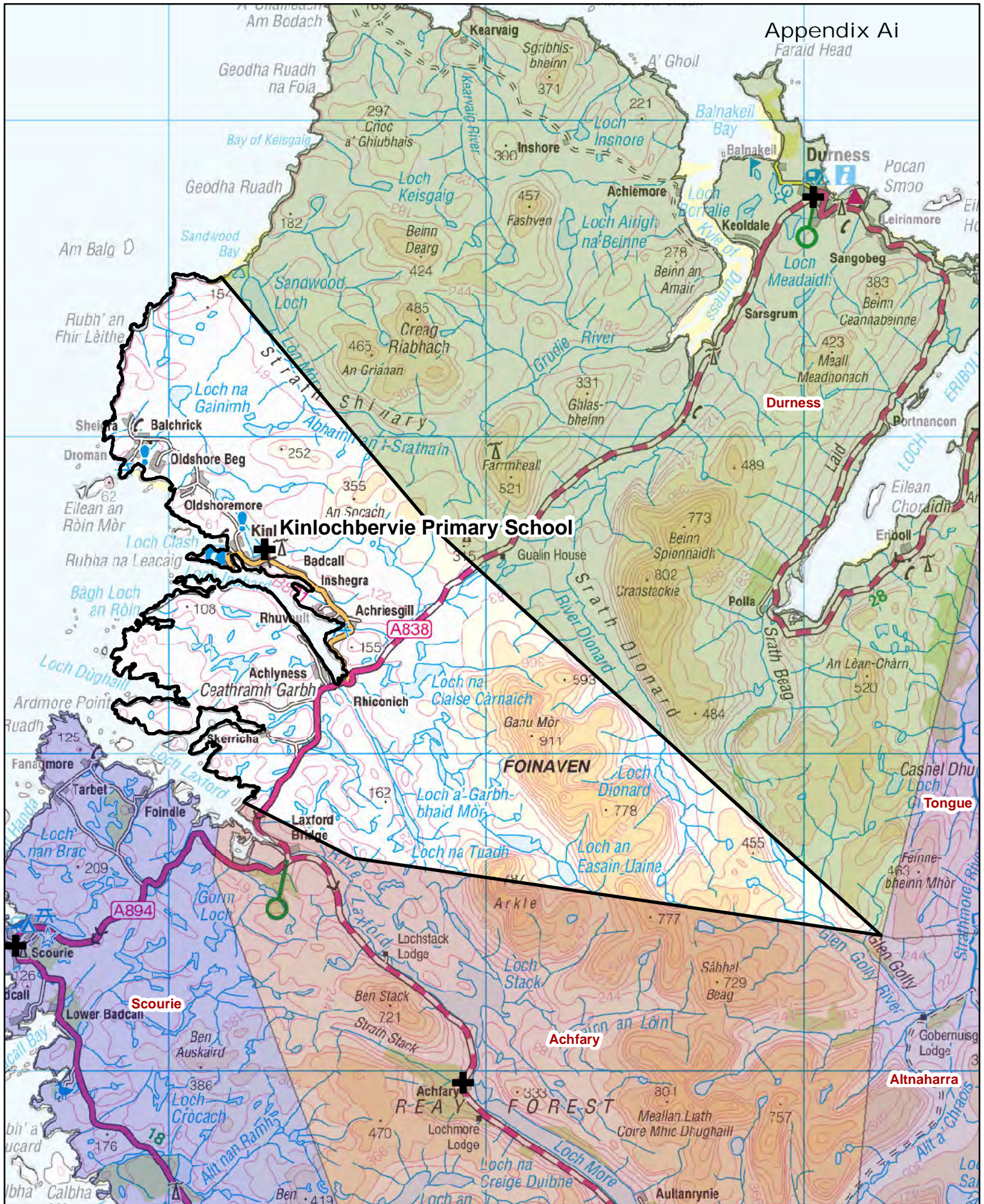
1 cm = 1,320 metres

© Crown copyright.

All rights reserved 100023369

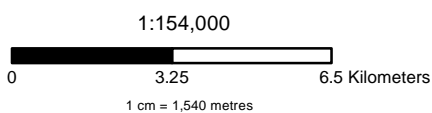


Planning & Development Service



Kinlochbervie Primary School

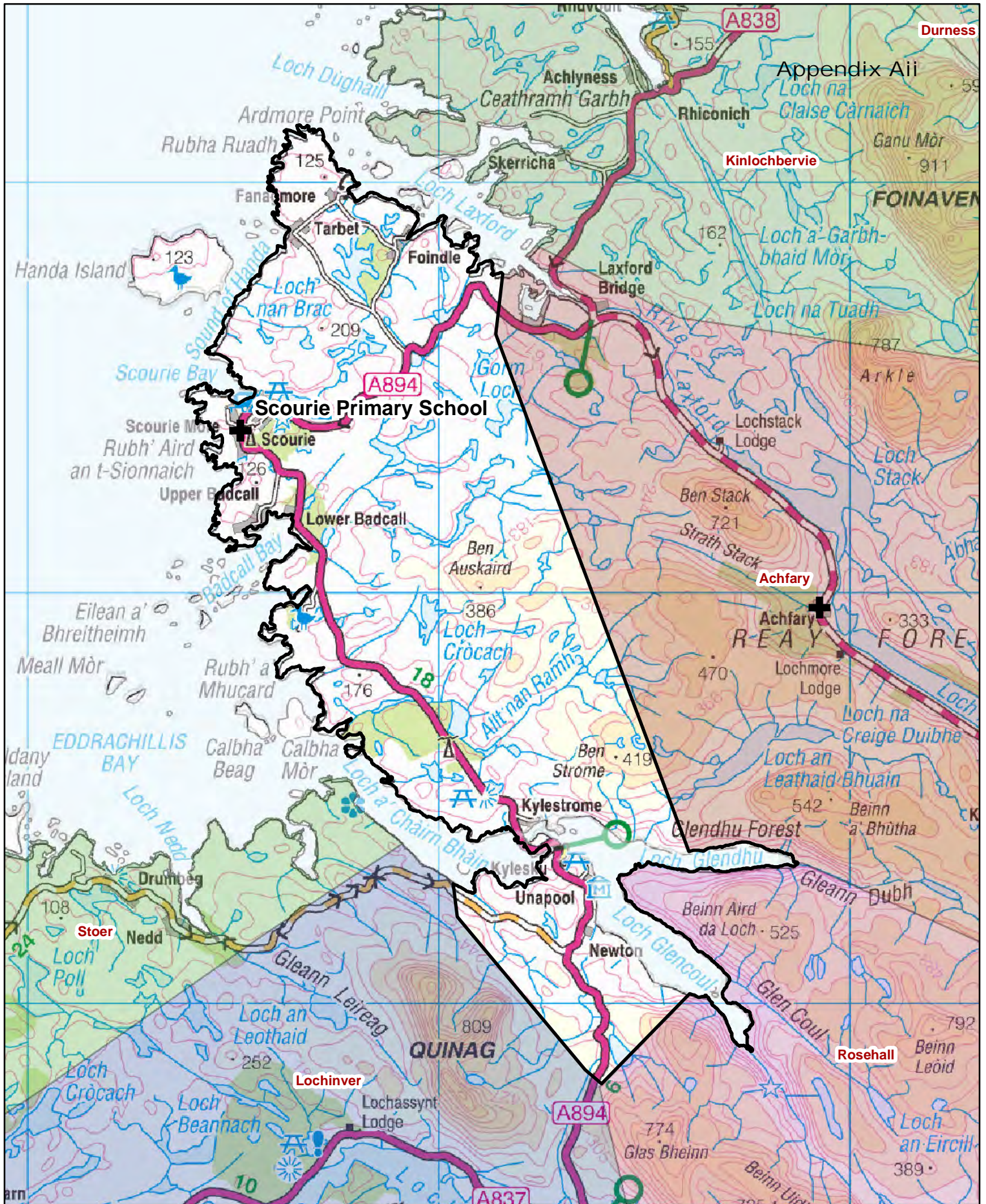
Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013



© Crown copyright.
All rights reserved 100023369

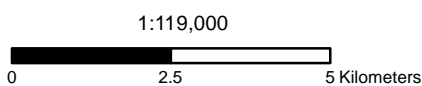


Planning & Development Service



Scourie Primary School

Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013

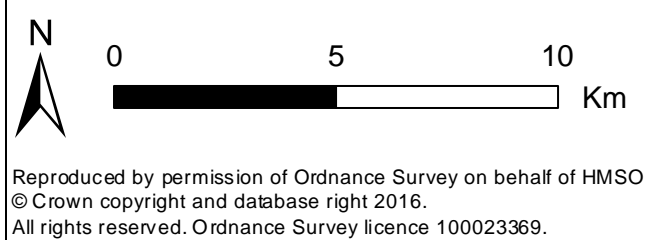


© Crown copyright.
All rights reserved 100023369



Planning & Development Service

Expected Impacts	Formal Closure of Achfary PS with re-zoning to Scourie	Formal Closure of Achfary PS with re-zoning to Kinlochbervie	Continued Mothballing (as a short-term measure only)	Re-Opening of Achfary PS
Availability of Age-Appropriate Peer Group	Better availability than at Achfary, but low numbers mean low probability of an age appropriate peer group.	Significantly better availability than at Achfary, but low numbers mean an age appropriate peer group may not be sustainable.	Significantly better availability than at Achfary, but low numbers mean an age appropriate peer group may not be sustainable.	Would not provide for an age-appropriate peer group.
Development of Profiling	Improved opportunities for comparisons and peer review.	Significantly improved opportunities for comparisons and peer review.	Significantly improved opportunities for comparisons and peer review.	Self-assessment made more difficult by limited comparisons and lack of peer review.
Access to Music, PE, Drama, Art	Would provide access to specialist teaching.	Would provide access to specialist teaching.	Would provide access to specialist teaching.	Would provide access to specialist teaching.
Provision for ASN	Scourie PS requires significant investment to improve disabled access.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.
Personal, Social, Health Needs	Limited opportunities for socialisation, but better than those available at Achfary.	Limited opportunities for socialisation, but better than those available at Achfary.	Limited opportunities for socialisation, but better than those available at Achfary.	Socialisation would be severely hampered by school roll of 2 or 3
Equality for All	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.
Morale and Ethos	As at present.	At present Achfary pupils are part of a larger class with opportunities for peer group interaction.	At present Achfary pupils are part of a larger class with opportunities for peer group interaction.	Morale and Ethos would have to be created. Low pupil numbers may have a negative impact.
Partnership Working	As at present.	As at present.	As at present.	As at present.
Standard of Accommodation	Scourie has ratings of C/B	Kinlochbervie has ratings of B/B.	As at present.	Achfary has ratings of B/C
Availability of Adequate Professional Network	Scourie PS would be too small to provide an adequate professional network.	KLB PS would be two-teacher school, and a wider professional contact is available via the adjacent High School.	As at Columns B and C	Would be a single teacher school with very limited professional network
Access to after-school activities	Access as at present.	Access as at present, but the facilities at KLB HS offer better opportunities than the other locations.	Access as at present, but the facilities at KLB HS offer better opportunities than the other locations.	Access might be possible by travelling to KLB or Scourie although pupils would be less familiar with their peers.
Access to school during adverse weather	Access as at present.	Access as at present.	Access as at present.	Improved access due to shorter travel distances.
Location in recognised village	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Travel Times	Additional travel time of 25 minutes (potential overall travel time of 44 minutes)	Additional travel time of 27 minutes (potential overall travel time of 46 minutes)	See Cols B and C	Potential maximum travel time of 19 minutes.
Provision of funded school transport for primary age pupils	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provision of funded transport for nursery age pupils	No	No	No	No, but with reduced travel times.
Community impact	Achfary PS is located within the village hall. Potential for further development for greater community use?	Achfary PS is located within the village hall. Potential for further development for greater community use?	Achfary PS is located within the village hall. Potential for further development for greater community use?	No opportunity for school building to be developed for community use.
Best Value	As at present.	As at present.	As at present	Additional annual revenue costs of c £64K



Lairg Primary School
 Note: Locations and Catchment Areas shown here were last updated in 2015; there may have been changes since then.
 Date: 29 January 2016 Ref: gis1108



Appendix D

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

ALTNAHARRA								FORECAST													
5110025	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PI Input								0	0	1											
Pupils/Hhld								0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Housing							0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placing Requests								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative New Houses								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-school moving into new houses								0	0	0	0										
P1 born in new houses											0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N3		1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N4		0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P I	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P II	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P III	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P IV	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P V	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P VI	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
P VII	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total Roll	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Total Capa	19	19	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Tot Roll - Tc	-12	-13	-19	-19	-20	-20	-20	-23	-23	-22	-23	-22	-23	-23	-22	-22	-23	-23	-23	-23	-23
(Tot Roll/Tc	37%	32%	24%	24%	20%	20%	20%	8%	8%	12%	9%	10%	8%	9%	10%	11%	9%	9%	9%	10%	10%

Typical birth rate factor children per new house **0.0000**
 Pre-school from new houses **0.0000**

Because of rounding, the sum of the PI-PVII figures may not be exactly the same as the Total Roll

Appendix Di

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

KINLOCHBERVIE

5108322	ACTUAL							FORECAST														
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
PI Input								4	2	2												
Pupils/Hhld								0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Housing							1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Placing Requests								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative New Houses								2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Pre-school moving into new houses								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P1 born in new houses											0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N3		3	2	3	2	4	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
N4		1	3	1	3	2	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
P I	4	2	0	3	1	3	2	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P II	4	4	2	0	3	1	3	2	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P III	4	3	4	3	0	3	1	4	2	4	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P IV	3	4	3	4	2	0	4	2	4	2	4	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P V	3	3	4	3	3	3	1	5	2	4	2	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
P VI	4	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	5	2	4	2	4	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
P VII	7	4	3	2	4	4	3	4	3	5	2	4	2	4	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	3
Total Roll	29	23	21	19	17	17	17	24	23	21	19	19	18	18	17	16	18	19	19	20	20	
Total Capa	41	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	46
Tot Roll - Tc	-12	-23	-25	-27	-29	-29	-29	-28	-29	-28	-29	-28	-28	-28	-29	-29	-28	-27	-27	-26	-26	-26
(Tot Roll/Tc	71%	50%	46%	41%	37%	37%	37%	39%	37%	40%	36%	40%	38%	40%	37%	38%	40%	41%	41%	42%	43%	
Typical birth rate factor children per new house								0.0000														
Pre-school from new houses								0.0000														

Because of rounding, the sum of the PI-PVII figures may not be exactly the same as the Total Roll

Appendix Dii

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

LAIRG	ACTUAL							FORECAST														
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
PI Input								11	7	6												
Pupils/Hhld								0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Housing							2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Placing Requests								-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Cumulative New Houses								6	10	14	18	22	26	30	34	38	42	46	50	54	58	
Pre-school moving into new houses								0	0	0	0											
P1 born in new houses											0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N3		7	6	12	5	12	7	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	9			
N4		9	8	8	14	6	11	7	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	9	9			
P I	5	2	7	3	5	14	7	10	6	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8
P II	3	6	1	5	4	6	13	7	10	6	5	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8
P III	8	3	6	2	6	3	6	13	7	11	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8
P IV	4	7	4	3	3	5	4	6	13	7	11	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
P V	6	4	6	5	3	2	5	4	6	13	7	11	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8
P VI	10	5	5	8	5	5	1	5	4	6	13	7	11	7	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	8
P VII	12	8	3	6	8	5	4	1	5	4	6	13	7	11	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	8
Total Roll	48	35	32	32	34	40	40	47	52	53	56	57	51	51	47	48	50	52	53	54	56	
Total Capa	107	107	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110
Tot Roll - Tc	-59	-72	-78	-78	-76	-70	-70	-63	-58	-57	-54	-53	-59	-59	-63	-62	-60	-58	-57	-56	-54	-54
(Tot Roll/Tc)	45%	33%	29%	29%	31%	36%	36%	42%	48%	48%	51%	51%	46%	46%	43%	44%	46%	47%	48%	49%	51%	
Typical birth rate factor children per new house								0.0000														
Pre-school from new houses								0.0000														

Because of rounding, the sum of the PI-PVII figures may not be exactly the same as the Total Roll

Appendix Diii

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

SCOURIE							ACTUAL	FORECAST													
5108829	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PI Input								0	4	4											
Pupils/Hhld								0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Housing							1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Placing Requests								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative New Houses								2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Pre-school moving into new houses								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P1 born in new houses											0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N3		1	1	2	1	0	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
N4		5	1	1	2	1	0	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
P I	5	0	4	0	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P II	6	6	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P III	3	5	6	0	5	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
P IV	5	2	5	7	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
P V	2	5	2	5	6	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
P VI	3	2	5	3	5	7	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
P VII	1	3	2	6	5	5	7	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	3	3	3	3
Total Roll	25	23	24	24	24	21	17	9	12	11	12	13	14	16	20	19	18	19	19	20	20
Total Capa	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Tot Roll - Tc	-17	-19	-18	-18	-18	-21	-25	-32	-29	-30	-28	-27	-25	-24	-21	-23	-24	-23	-23	-22	-22
(Tot Roll/Tc	60%	55%	57%	57%	57%	50%	40%	24%	31%	29%	33%	36%	40%	43%	50%	46%	43%	44%	45%	46%	47%
Typical birth rate factor children per new house								0.0000													
Pre-school from new houses								0.0000													

Because of rounding, the sum of the PI-PVII figures may not be exactly the same as the Total Roll

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS - SUMMARY OF PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL DOCUMENT - ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Consideration by the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee

The Proposal paper has been issued as a result of a decision approved by the above Committee.

Prior to submission to Committee, pre-consultation discussions took place between Highland Council officials and the Parent Councils of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primaries, as well as with Kinlochbervie Community Council, Scourie Community Council, and Reay Forest Estate.

Proposal Document issued to consultees and published on Highland Council Website

A copy of the Proposal paper will be issued free of charge to the following consultees:

- (i) Parents of pupils in the catchment area of Achfary Primary School; and parents of pupils attending Kinlochbervie Primary School and Scourie Primary School; including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All P4-7 pupils attending Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (v) Staff of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 3 schools;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor
- (x) The Duke of Westminster (owner of the Reay Forest Estate)
- (xi) The Care and Learning Alliance, who operate the nurseries at Kinlochbervie and Scourie).
- (xii) Members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership

and will be published on the Council website.

Publication in local newspapers

A notice announcing the public meeting will be placed in the Northern Times and on the Highland Council's Facebook page.

Length of Consultation period

The consultation period will begin on 11 April 2016. The consultation will thereafter run until close of business on 24 May 2016 which includes a period of 31 school days.

Public meeting

A public meeting will be held at 7.00pm on 26 April at Achfary Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting is invited to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Council, will be chaired by a senior elected councillor, and will be addressed by officers of the Care and Learning Service.

The meeting will be an opportunity for the public to hear more about the proposal; to ask questions about the proposal; and to have the views of all stakeholders recorded so that they can be taken into account. A note will be taken at the meeting of questions asked and views expressed. This note will be published on the Council website. The meeting will also be recorded.

Involvement of HMI/Education Scotland

When the Proposal Document is published, a copy will also be sent to Education Scotland (HMIE) by the Council. HMIE will also be sent, by 30 May 2016, a copy of any relevant written representations that are received by the Council from any person during the consultation period. HMIE will also receive the summary note of the public meeting that will be held and so far as is practicable a copy of any other relevant documentation. HMIE will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 20 June 2016. In preparing their report, HMIE may visit the affected schools and make such enquiries of people there as they consider appropriate.

Preparation of Consultation Report

Highland Council will review the proposal having regard to the HMI Report, written representations that it has received, and oral representations made at the public meeting. It will then prepare a Consultation Report. This Report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be sent to anyone who submitted a written representation during consultation. It will be available on the Council website as well as at the affected schools and local libraries, free of charge. The Report will include a summary of the written and oral representations made during consultation and a copy of the HMI Report, together with the Council's considered response to the issues raised. The Report will include details of details of any alleged inaccuracies and/or omissions and how these have been handled. The Consultation Report will be published at least 3 weeks prior to being submitted to the Education, Children and Adult Services (ECAS) Committee, who will make a recommendation to the full Highland Council.

In publishing the report the Council will invite any person or party to make further representations to the Committee prior to its meeting. A notice to this effect will also be published on the Highland Council website.

At the present time the Council intends to publish its Report on 18 October 2016, prior to submission to the ECAS Committee on 9 November 2016. However, this timescale may change depending on the nature of issues raised during consultation, and the need to give these full consideration. In the latter event, the Report may not be submitted until a later Committee meeting.

Any closure proposal approved at ECAS Committee in November 2016 would require to be confirmed by the full Highland Council on 15 December 2016.

Scottish Ministers Call-in

In the event that the Council decides to close the school at that stage, it is required to notify the Scottish Ministers of that decision and provide them with a copy of the Proposal Document and Consultation Report in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, within 6 working days of the decision being made, and to publish on its website a notice that it has done so, detailing the opportunity to make further representations within 3 weeks. The Scottish Ministers have an 8-week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call-in the proposal. If the Scottish Ministers call-in the proposal, it will be referred to a School Closure Review Panel. Within the first 3 weeks of the 8-week period, the Scottish Ministers will take account of any relevant representations made to them by any person. Until the outcome of the 8-week call-in process has been notified to the Council, the Council will not proceed to implement the proposal.

Note on Corrections

If any inaccuracy or omission is discovered in this Proposal paper, either by the Council or any other person, the Council will determine if relevant information has been omitted or, if the paper contains an inaccuracy. The Council will then take appropriate action, which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the Proposal or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period, if appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and HMI will be advised.

Appendix F

**Achfary Primary School
Sutherland
The Highland Council
11 December 2007**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	3
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Leading and improving the school	5
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	7
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	8
How can you contact us?	9

1. Background

Achfary Primary School was inspected in September 2007 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils and staff. Members of the inspection team also met a number of parents¹. There was no Parent Council.

The school serves the village of Achfary and the surrounding area of Sutherland. At the time of the inspection the roll was six. There were no pupils at the P1-P3 stages. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Enthusiastic pupils who were keen to learn.
- High quality teaching which helped pupils improve.
- Attainment of pupils in English language, and pupils' abilities in using information and communications technology (ICT).
- Staff's provision of care and welfare for pupils.
- Links with parents and the wider community.
- The teamwork of all staff, and the overall leadership of the headteacher.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to all of the questionnaires normally appears in Appendix 2. However, as there were fewer than five respondees in the group of parents, in order to maintain confidentiality, that analysis is not provided.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

HM Inspectors also interviewed staff, parents and pupils during the inspection. The following is an analysis of the views expressed by staff, parents and pupils. Almost all parents, pupils and staff were very positive about the school, and felt that it was very well led. Parents felt that their children enjoyed being in school, and that the staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children. They believed that staff were always approachable, and that they would respond appropriately when given information affecting pupils. All felt welcome in the school. Pupils were happy in the school, and felt that they were helped to improve. They believed that they were treated fairly, and that behaviour was good. They also felt safe and well looked after. Staff enjoyed being in school, and felt very well supported by the headteacher. They believed that pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. They also felt that there was mutual respect between themselves and pupils.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Staff provided a very wide range of learning experiences for pupils which successfully developed their knowledge, skills and understanding in key areas of the curriculum. Teachers used time very effectively to ensure that an appropriate focus was given to the expressive arts. Appropriate time was available to allow pupils to travel to a range of events and field trips. These activities all helped to develop the social skills of pupils. Teaching programmes were very well organised and had a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly in science and writing in English language. The school had been awarded Health Promoting School status and pupils were well aware of what was required for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils benefited from two hours per week of physical activity. All pupils had been involved in the school gaining an Eco School (Scotland) award. They were actively involved in recycling and understood the necessity to care for the environment. Their involvement with the Eco School project had helped them focus on key areas of citizenship, as well as involving them in helpful enterprise activities. The overall quality of teaching was very good. Teachers were very well prepared and used questioning very effectively to encourage pupils to think for themselves. They explained clearly to pupils what they expected them to learn, and also reviewed what they had done to check their levels of understanding. Teachers also used ICT effectively as part of their teaching. Visiting teachers made an important contribution to pupils' learning in key areas of the curriculum including art and design, music, physical education (PE), science and writing. Homework was set regularly and was suitably varied. Overall, the quality of teaching in the school generated an enthusiasm for learning amongst pupils.

Pupils were enthusiastic and well motivated learners. They settled to their tasks quickly, and cooperated very well with one another. Older pupils willingly helped younger ones develop their skills, for example, in ICT. The pace of pupils' work was very good and, as a result, pupils were making very good progress. Pupils were accustomed to working independently and making some decisions for themselves. They were making particularly good progress in using ICT. They were capable of editing texts on screen, and were involved in creating an animated film using a digital camera and computer program. They participated with enthusiasm in PE where they were beginning to develop good ball skills. They were developing good skills in drawing and shading in art. In science, they were developing their knowledge and understanding of conductors and insulators through their experimentation with circuits. Although their study of World War II had only recently

begun they were developing a good knowledge of evacuees, the events which led to the war, and key national figures.

The school took very good steps to help pupils develop their wider achievements. Pupils participated in the after school drama club, and all had enjoyed their performance to the local community. Members of the community commented positively on the pupils' musical performance at the school prize giving. Some pupils took part in a shinty club organised at a neighbouring school. A few pupils had their poems published in a commercial publication, and all had been involved in raising funds for a Highland hospice.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good. Pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment, and making very good progress. Higher attaining pupils had made particularly good progress in reading, and were producing writing of very high quality using a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils listened very well to one another and adults and responded appropriately. They were very articulate when talking with adults, and gave clear description of texts they had read and work they had undertaken. Pupils read widely and were fluent while reading aloud. They had a good understanding of what they had read, and appreciated the styles of different writers. The standards in reading of a few pupils were very high, and they read a wide range of texts. Pupils wrote a range of prose and poetry for a wide variety of purposes. They organised their writing very effectively, and created pieces of texts which were interesting and captured the attention of the reader. Overall the writing was of a very high standard. Standards of handwriting and presentation were also very good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good. Pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment and making good progress. They had a good understanding of a range of graphs and had created a number of them using the computer. Older pupils could use scales on the axes of graphs effectively. Their skills in using databases and spreadsheets were at an early stage of development. Pupils had a good understanding of a range of numbers and carried out written calculations accurately. They were developing good skills in mental calculation. They were not consistently quick and accurate in multiplying and dividing mentally. They had a good knowledge of units of measurement and could use both the twelve and twenty-four hour clock. They also had a good recall of the names and properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They were aware of the strategies required to tackle problems, and now required more practice in deciding which of these to use.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Staff had a very good knowledge of pupils' progress and their varying needs, and took appropriate action to address identified support needs. Teaching programmes were targeted appropriately and, as a result, pupils were making very good progress. Assessments had been well used to confirm teachers' judgements of pupils' attainment. Discussions had taken place with staff from the local secondary school to help provide appropriate resources for higher attaining pupils in reading. Pupils with additional support needs had been well supported and helped become more confident and self assured. The time was now

appropriate, however, to create individualised educational programmes for such pupils in order to target their needs and monitor their progress more formally. The school was well supported by the area learning support coordinator.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	<p>Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils were excellent. Staff used their knowledge of pupils' social, emotional and personal needs very effectively to help pupils cooperate with one another and develop good relationships. They had discussed anti-bullying with pupils as part of the health and religious and moral education programmes. Staff had taken effective steps to deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. They cooperated with parents very effectively to provide care when necessary for pupils with allergies. Staff had undergone appropriate training, and had carried out effective risk assessments to ensure pupils' safety on school trips. The school nurse had also discussed allergic reactions with all pupils to help them understand and support others. All staff had been trained in child protection.</p>
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The school's accommodation was good overall and was located within the community hall. Pupils and staff benefited from a well appointed classroom, kitchen, spacious hall and headteacher's office. Staff had created a stimulating learning environment in the classroom. They made very good use of the display of pupils' work to encourage pupils to produce work of high quality. Pupils and staff had improved the school grounds through the creation of a kitchen garden and a wildlife garden as part of a 'Grounds for Learning' project. Pupils had grown, harvested and, with the assistance of the school cook, eaten their own produce. Both gardens had helped pupils observe and become more aware of the birdlife in the area. Security arrangements were appropriate. There was no provision for access to the school for those with physical disabilities. Staff were required to use pupils' toilets.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The overall ethos within the school was very good. Pupils, parents and staff were very proud of their school. Pupils were very polite and friendly, and courteous with visitors. Relationships were good, and there was a great deal of respect between pupils and staff. Pupils behaved well, and persevered at their activities. Staff morale was high, and there was a very good spirit of teamwork within the school. Pupils took part in weekly religious observance. Staff set clear expectations of the pupils and expected them to produce work of a high standard. Overall, pupils responded very well to these expectations. Although there was no Pupil Council, all pupils were members of the eco committee. This had a positive impact on their attitudes to the local environment. All pupils were very well included in the life of the school. Staff and pupils helped new pupils settle quickly into the school. Pupils had a good understanding of the issues of tolerance and respect for others, and were aware of issues of anti-racism.</p>
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>Links with parents and the wider community were very good. Although there was no Parent Council, parents supported the school very well in a number of ways. Staff discussed pupils with parents on a regular, informal basis and also produced very informative written reports for parents. The school provided regular newsletters and sought parents' views on aspects of the school's provision. Parents were invited to view the resources used for the teaching of sensitive health issues. The local community was very supportive of the school, with a community volunteer helping on trips and assisting pupils to maintain the school gardens. There were good links with Kinlochberrie High School and other schools in the area. Arrangements were being made to restart the group meetings of headteachers of small schools to support further headteachers and staff.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Achfary Primary School provided a very high quality of education for its pupils. Staff provided a very good curriculum and the quality of teaching helped develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils were making very good progress in their learning, and achieved high levels of attainment in writing in particular. The staff met the needs of all pupils effectively, and now required to formalise the programmes required for pupils with additional support needs.

The headteacher had the respect of parents, pupils and staff. She was a very effective leader and manager who had worked successfully to provide a stimulating curriculum for pupils. She had determined and implemented appropriate priorities within the school in order to make improvements. In all of these efforts she had been very well supported by a staff who worked very well together. She had a very good knowledge of pupils' progress, and now required to refine her procedures for quality assurance by monitoring more formally the quality of learning and teaching. Overall, the school had demonstrated that it had the capacity to improve.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- develop individualised educational programmes for pupils with additional support needs; and
- raise attainment in mathematics.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Dr Roddy Duncan
HM Inspector

11 December 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	very good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	excellent
Accommodation and facilities	good
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents and the community	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below. As fewer than five responses were received from parents, in order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided.

What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They enjoyed being at school, and were told when they had done something well.• They felt that they were treated fairly, and felt safe and well looked after.• Teachers expected them to work hard, and helped them keep safe and healthy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no significant issues.
What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Almost all staff were positive about most aspects of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1SF or by telephoning 01463 253115. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 (fax 0800 377 7331) or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2007

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Appendix G

**Kinlochbervie Primary School
The Highland Council
2 September 2008**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	1
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Leading and improving the school	5
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	7
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	8
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

Kinlochbervie Primary School was inspected in May 2008 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council, and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the village of Kinlochbervie and the small townships in the surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 33. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was above the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- A very welcoming and inclusive ethos.
- Courteous, well-behaved and motivated pupils.
- High quality attainment in English language and mathematics.
- High quality accommodation and the use made of the local environment to support and extend learning.
- The teamwork of all staff and their contribution to meeting the needs of all learners.
- The leadership of the headteacher.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. They felt their children enjoyed being at school and were very well looked after. Parents thought that

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

the school communicated with them regularly and responded promptly to matters of concern. They felt that the school was well led. Pupils were happy about almost all aspects of the school. They appreciated the efforts of their teachers in keeping them safe and improving their learning. Teaching and support staff were very positive about all aspects of the school. They enjoyed working in the school and felt very well supported by the headteacher.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The school's curriculum provided a very good range of experiences and took very good account of national and education authority guidance. The Active Schools Coordinator and visiting teachers in music and art and design were enhancing the development of pupils' skills. Staff had begun to make good use of time towards the end of the school day to enable pupils to learn through play. Teachers placed an appropriate emphasis on pupils' personal and social development, which included health education and education for citizenship. Pupils benefited from appropriate opportunities for physical education each week. Pupils in the P5 to P7 class were acquiring good conversational skills in French. Staff made effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Interactions between pupils and teachers were very positive. The overall quality of teaching across the school was very good. Teachers provided clear explanations and instructions and built successfully on prior learning. They all shared the purposes of lessons with pupils, gave very helpful and detailed feedback and told them how to improve their work. All teachers used praise and rewards effectively to encourage and motivate pupils. They also used written comments appropriately in jotters to identify pupils' strengths and highlight areas for improvement. Arrangements for assessing, tracking and monitoring pupils' progress were effective. Teachers made good use of homework to enhance the activities being carried out in class.

Learner's experiences were very good. Pupils settled quickly to their classwork, were well-behaved and responded enthusiastically to teachers' questions. Staff provided appropriately frequent opportunities for pupils to be active and to learn independently. Pupils responded well when working collaboratively on tasks in the P5 to P7 class. At all stages, pupils were learning effective skills in drama and physical education. Pupils had effective opportunities to learn in different ways, to be creative and expressive, to think critically and to set and evaluate their own targets for learning. Pupils were developing good skills in the use of ICT in their learning.

Improvements in performance

Overall, improvements in performance were good.

The quality of attainment in English language was very good overall. Almost all pupils attained, or exceeded, appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Pupils who had not achieved these levels were making very good progress with their coursework. Throughout the school, pupils talked with confidence, expressed personal views and listened attentively. At the early stages, pupils were making steady progress

with reading. Pupils in the P5 to P7 class were highly motivated readers and were able to discuss authors and identify personal preferences. At all stages, pupils wrote effectively for a variety of purposes and across all curricular areas. In the P5 to P7 class, pupils wrote successfully in a range of genres, including science reports, poetry and play scripts. Pupils in the upper stages did not have sufficient opportunities to complete extended pieces of imaginative and personal writing.

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was very good. Almost all pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in key aspects of mathematics. Most pupils at the early stages achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils with additional support needs were making good progress. At all stages, pupils were able to handle and interpret information accurately using an appropriate range of graphs and tables. They made effective and regular use of computer software. By P7, pupils were competent in written and mental calculations. Almost all pupils were able to round numbers and use decimals accurately. Across the school, pupils were secure in working out money calculations. They had a good knowledge of angles, shape and symmetry. They could identify correctly a range of shapes and discuss their properties. Pupils' skills in problem-solving and enquiry were developing well. They were able to identify and use a range of strategies to solve problems. Most were able to communicate their solutions clearly.

Pupils were making good progress in developing skills in art and design, music, drama and physical education. Across the school, pupils demonstrated a sound awareness of a range of drawing and painting techniques. Pupils had used these techniques creatively to produce a range of imaginative art displays. At P1 to P4, pupils worked cooperatively in small groups to create an attractive fruit collage, making choices about which materials to use. In environmental studies, pupils were developing an appropriate range of knowledge and skills. Pupils had successfully designed and built models of their own versions of an energy efficient house. At P5 to P7, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of aspects of the solar system and about the impact of meteors on the surface of the moon and the effects of gravity. Throughout the school, pupils were confident in using ICT. Pupils at the upper stages demonstrated very good understanding of how to create animations and were developing their skills in filming and photography.

The school encouraged pupils' broad achievements very effectively. Pupils had achieved success in a broad range of endeavours, including sporting and enterprise activities. Many had enjoyed success and represented the school in shinty competitions. All pupils benefited from taking part in Gaelic lessons, batik and mosaic workshops. They enthusiastically took part in bridge building and a drumming workshop with pupils from other local primary schools. Pupils at all stages developed their awareness of citizenship in a variety of ways. For example, they raised funds for charities and performed in concerts for members of the local community. Pupils in the upper primary developed their self-awareness and appreciation of others, as well as their skills in outdoor education, through highly successful residential trips.

The school had made very good progress in achieving the priorities in its improvement plan. The planned improvements were having a positive effect on pupils' experiences. Pupils were benefiting from working with their teachers, the local countryside ranger and science staff from the local secondary school as they planned and recorded science

experiments. At all stages pupils benefited from involvement in the Eco-Schools Scotland project as they worked to reduce waste and encourage recycling.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Pupils' learning needs were met very effectively. Staff had a very good knowledge of pupils' strengths and areas for development. They took appropriate steps to ensure that pupils made very good progress by undertaking tasks which were well matched to their needs. Staff set clearly stated learning targets, reviewed pupils' progress regularly and discussed this with parents. They worked closely with parents, professionals and support agencies to support pupils with additional support needs. Staff liaised closely with the support for learning teacher who provided useful advice regarding any pupils with additional support needs. Support staff provided very good assistance for individuals and groups. Very good arrangements were in place to support pupils with English as an additional language.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The overall quality of care, welfare and development was very good. Staff knew their pupils well and were very sensitive to their emotional, social and medical needs. Staff were aware of child protection procedures and knew how to implement these. Appropriate procedures were in place for the administration of medicines and safe use of the Internet. Effective procedures were in place to check on the location of absent pupils. The Pupil Council played an important part in the life of the school. Staff and a range of partner agencies worked effectively together to support children and their families. The school had appropriate transition arrangements in place for pupils as they entered P1 and transferred from P7 to Kinlochbervie High School.
Management and use of resources and space for learning	The quality of accommodation and facilities was very good. All staff made good use of attractive displays to enhance the learning environment. Classrooms were large, bright and well equipped. Pupils benefited from extensive and well-planned grounds which provided ample space for play, games and sport. The school had made very good use of available space to support pupils and welcome parents. There were appropriate security arrangements. The school was fully accessible to users with restricted mobility.

Aspect	Comment
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	<p>There was a very good sense of community and very positive and supportive interactions between staff and pupils. Staff praised children appropriately to acknowledge their efforts and achievements and to build self-esteem. Staff promoted a strong sense of fairness and mutual respect through the positive use of praise and reward. All staff contributed fully to the very good ethos of the school. The school effectively celebrated pupils' achievements in well-presented displays of their work. All staff were fully committed to ensuring all pupils achieved their full potential. A racial equality policy was in place and education authority procedures were well implemented. Weekly assemblies provided very good opportunities for religious observance and to celebrate pupils' achievements.</p>
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	<p>The school had very good links with parents and the local community. Very good opportunities were available for parents and staff to discuss children's progress. Parents were kept well informed about the life and work of the school. Parents of P1 pupils were given very helpful advice prior to their children's entry to the school. Parents had appropriate opportunities to view resources used for sensitive issues in health education. They received regular and informative reports on pupils' progress. The newly formed Parent Council provided active and high quality support. Parent support through fundraising had enhanced outdoor learning and play opportunities for pupils. The school nurse, community policeman, parental volunteers and the Active Schools Coordinator contributed very effectively to the work of the school. The school had established effective links with local businesses.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Kinlochbervie Primary School provided a secure, well ordered and friendly learning environment within which staff put a high priority on pupils' care and welfare. Primary pupils were happy, very motivated to learn and well-behaved. The quality of learning and teaching was very good. Pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics was very good. Pupils enjoyed their learning and their skills in personal and social education were well developed. Staff provided very effective support for pupils requiring additional assistance in their learning. Relationships with parents and the community were very good.

The headteacher provided very good leadership. She demonstrated a high level of commitment, professional expertise and care in managing and moving the school forward. She had developed very positive relationships with pupils, parents and staff and had gained their respect. She recognised the talents, interests and development needs of all staff and supported them effectively in their endeavours. The school's approaches to improvement through self-evaluation were good. The headteacher effectively monitored the work of the school by observing lessons, monitoring teachers' plans and sampling pupils' work. She had consulted parents and pupils on aspects of the work of the whole school and taken good account of their views. She fully involved staff in evaluating the quality of the provision and in identifying improvement priorities. All staff showed a strong commitment to taking these forward. The school had many strengths and was very well placed to build on the existing high standards.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- further develop the current approaches to self-evaluation to ensure they are appropriately focused on securing improvements in key areas of the school's work.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

David M Martin
HM Inspector

2 September 2008

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
The curriculum	very good
Teaching for effective learning	very good
Learners' experiences (primary stages)	very good
Improvements in performance (primary stages)	very good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs (primary stages)	very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	very good
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	very good

Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	good
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoyed being at school and were treated fairly. • Staff showed concern for children's care and welfare. • They were made to feel welcome and were consulted on decisions which affected their children. • The school was well led and if they raised a matter of concern it would be dealt with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers encouraged them and helped them when they had difficulties with their school work. • The school helped to keep them safe and healthy. • Pupils had a say in deciding how to make the school better. • Teachers expected them to work hard and were good at letting them know how they could improve their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around one quarter of pupils thought that not all pupils were treated fairly and that the behaviour of pupils in the school was not good.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school was well led. • There was good communication between senior managers and staff. • The school worked hard to promote good relations with the community. • They had good opportunities to be involved in decision making. • Continuous professional development was effective. • They liked working in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, Culture and Sport, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsa.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2008

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

14 January 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

**Scourie Primary School
The Highland Council**

Recently, as you may know, I inspected your child's school. During my visit, I talked to parents and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff. I wanted to find out how well children are learning and achieving and how well the school supports children to do their best. The headteacher shared with me the school's successes and priorities for improvement. I looked at some particular aspects of the school's recent work, including numeracy and mathematics, writing and support for learning. As a result, I was able to find out how good the school is at improving children's education.

How well do children learn and achieve?

The school is improving how well children learn and achieve. Staff have been focussing on improving children's behaviour. As a result, there is a calm and welcoming learning environment across the school. Most children enjoy school. They concentrate well and keep on task in the classroom. They are learning to work both independently and in small groups. Children are motivated when taking part in activity-based tasks. They are positive about new approaches to setting and reviewing targets for what they will learn in literacy and numeracy. This is helping children gain an awareness of what they are good at and what they need to do to improve. Increasingly, children are involved in reviewing their own work and the work of others at the end of lessons. This is encouraging them to think more about their learning and to achieve success. Staff should continue to develop approaches to target-setting and to supporting children in discussing and reviewing their learning.

Children are not making enough progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. Staff are aware of the need to improve children's skills in these areas and are taking action to improve children's attainment. Children are confident and articulate when speaking during class discussions. They can recall main events from texts they have read. Children are less skilled in analysing texts more deeply. They do not yet write well enough for a variety of purposes. The school now needs to implement, as planned, a programme for developing children's skills in writing. Across the school, children's skills in number and measurement need to be developed further. Children enjoy practising their skills in numeracy and mathematics using information and communications technology and games. They now need to apply their skills better to solve problems in numeracy and mathematics. Children achieve well in a range of sporting activities outwith the classroom, including shinty and football.

Within the school, there has been a focus on developing children's skills in music and, as a result, most children can play a musical instrument and many participate in the school band.

How well does the school support children to develop and learn?

Staff are improving how they support children to develop and learn. They now provide children with more varied opportunities to learn. Staff are developing their confidence in using Curriculum for Excellence guidance to plan children's learning. Visiting specialists, for example in art and design, enhance children's experiences. Staff are working closely with other schools in the associated schools group (ASG) to review the programmes for science and social studies. Together with the ASG, they are planning interesting ways for children to apply the skills they have learned through projects such as the 'goblin racing car'. Staff now need to ensure they plan learning which provides progression in children's knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of the curriculum. Staff have reviewed arrangements for supporting children who require additional help with their learning. They identify children who need support and put in place additional planning to help children make progress. The learning support teacher and pupil support assistants provide valuable support for those children who require additional help. Staff now need to make sure they provide children with tasks at the right level of difficulty, particularly when planning whole-class activities. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They value the many opportunities to support children in their learning through taking after school clubs and helping with school activities.

How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

Since taking up post, the headteacher has gained the respect of children, parents and staff. She has an accurate view of what is working well in the school and what needs to improve. The headteacher provides strong leadership and clear guidance for staff. Staff work very well together as a team. They are highly committed to improving the work of the school and have put in place changes which are making children's learning experiences better. Staff now need to ensure they monitor and track children's learning carefully to ensure all children make appropriate progress. Parents feel they can offer their views and opinions to help the work of the school. They support recent changes in the life and work of the school. Overall, approaches to self-evaluation have not yet had enough impact on improving children's progress and achievement.

This inspection found the following key strengths.

- Welcoming school ethos.
- Partnership with parents and the community to support children's learning.
- Teamwork and commitment of staff to improving the work of the school.
- Positive changes made by the headteacher.

I discussed with staff and the Highland Council how they might continue to improve the school. This is what I agreed with them.

- Meet children's learning needs more effectively to improve their progress.
- Continue to review and update the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence.
- Ensure approaches to self-evaluation improve the work of the school.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer will work with the Highland Council to build capacity for improvement, and will maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within eighteen months of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

Janie McManus
HM Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations, for your school can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/primsec/ScoriePrimarySchoolHighland.asp>

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

If you want to give us feedback or make a complaint about our work, please contact us by telephone on 0141 282 5000, or e-mail: complaints@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to us addressing your letter to the Complaints Manager, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Livingston EH54 6GA.

Financial Template- Achfary PS closure

Appendix I

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Forecast revenue costs for Achfary PS			
	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving schools	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL			
School costs			
<i>Employee costs</i>			
teaching staff	42,961	0	42,961
support staff	8,217	0	8,217
teaching staff training (CPD etc)	0	0	0
support staff training	0	0	0
Supply costs	1,738	0	1,738
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance	142	0	142
non domestic rates	0	0	0
water & sewerage charges	394	0	394
energy costs	6,477	0	6,477
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	2,412	0	2,412
building repair & maintenance	220	0	220
grounds maintenance	0	0	0
facilities management costs	0	0	0
revenue costs arising from capital	0	0	0
other	0	0	0
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials	1,431	70	1,361
catering (contract or inhouse)	437	200	238
SQA costs	0	0	0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	0	0	0
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	0	0	0
other pupil transport costs	0	0	0
staff travel	0	0	0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	64,430	270	64,160
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals	0	0	0
Lets	0	0	0
External care provider	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	0	0	0
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	64,430	270	64,160
UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	64,430	270	64,160

Table 2

Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost		
Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3

Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	142
non domestic rates	0
water & sewerage charges	394
energy costs	2863
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	0
security costs	0
building repair & maintenance	0
grounds maintenance	0
facilities management costs	0
other	0
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	3399

Table 4

Non-recurring revenue costs	
none	0
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	0

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
none	0
GAE IMPACT	

Note: As Achfary PS is currently mothballed the costs in column 1 of table 1 above reflect the estimated costs of running the school if it were to reopen. If the school were then to close the additional costs at the receiving school, Kinlochberrie, are shown in column 2. The net savings from the closure can be seen in column 3. As the school is currently mothballed these savings are already being realised.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL
CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared on a proposal:

- To discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

Details of Consultation To Be Carried Out:

The Proposal will be the subject of statutory consultation from under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the following will be consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils in the catchment areas of Achfary Primary School, and parents of children attending Kinlochbervie Primary School and Scourie Primary School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All P4-7 pupils attending Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools;
- (v) Staff of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools;
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 3 schools;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor;
- (x) The Duke of Westminster (owner of the Achfary PS building);
- (xi) Care and Learning Alliance (who operate the nurseries at Kinlochbervie and Scourie).

The proposal document will also be advertised in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

A public meeting will be held in Achfary on 26 April 2016. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

IDENTIFIED IMPACTS

Equality Category	Impact	Evidence
AGE	Neutral.	The proposal relates to 3 primary schools and as such primarily affects children in the 3-12 age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit

		<p>to the children in the area concerned.</p> <p>No negative age related effects arise.</p> <p>Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of schools provision.</p>
DISABILITY	Neutral, but with some positive benefits.	As there are currently no pupils attending Achfary School, the proposal will not have any adverse effects on disabled children. In principle, the integration of disabled pupils within the larger peer group in the alternative schools promotes integration.
GENDER	Neutral	The proposal will have no effect on gender equality issues.
PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY	Neutral	There would be no direct impact on pregnancy and maternity issues.
GENDER REASSIGNMENT	Neutral	The proposal will have no impact on gender reassignment equality.
MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	Neutral	The proposal will have no impact on equality issues around marriage and civil partnership.
MINORITY LANGUAGES	Positive	There would be no impact on minority languages.
RACE	Neutral	The proposal will have no impact on race equality.
RELIGION OR BELIEF	Neutral	None of the schools affected are denominational. The proposal will have no impact on religious equality.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Neutral	The proposal will have no impact on equality around sexual orientation.
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN	Neutral.	There would be no direct impacts on Looked After Children.
YOUNG CARERS	Neutral	There would be no impacts on Young Carers.
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN DEPRIVATION	Neutral	The proposal is being advanced on the basis of educational benefit for all children, although not specifically those living in deprivation.

RURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Rural Impact Assessment has been prepared on a proposal to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, re-assigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

Details of Consultation To Be Carried Out:

The Proposal will be the subject of statutory consultation from under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the following will be consulted:

- (i) Parents of pupils in the catchment area of Achfary Primary School, and parents of pupils attending Kinlochbervie Primary School and Scourie Primary School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All P4-7 pupils attending Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (iii) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (iv) The Parent Councils of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (v) Staff of Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools.
- (vi) Trade union representatives;
- (vii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 3 schools;
- (viii) Education Scotland;
- (ix) Highland Youth Convenor.
- (x) The Duke of Westminster (owner of the Achfary PS building).
- (xi) Care and Learning Alliance (who operate the nurseries at Kinlochbervie and Scourie).
- (xii) The Highland Community Planning Partnership

The proposal document will also be advertised in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

A public meeting will be held in Achfary on 26 April 2016. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

Describe what the change will mean in rural communities

Although the proposal involves a formal closure of service, the service itself has not operated since the summer of 2012. In practical terms the proposal will not change the current position.

The relocation of service (which in practical terms has already taken place) involves moving local school provision from Achfary to Kinlochbervie.

Achfary School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 2. The Highland Council believes that educational benefits arise when schools have a sufficient number of

children to allow pupils to work collaboratively and participate in team sports and wider activities; and where there are age appropriate peer groups of a sufficient size to allow a range of interactions and relationships to form and reform.

How will people in rural communities be affected?

Accessibility of service – since the “mothballing” of Achfary Primary School pupils of P1-7 age from the Achfary catchment have been provided with free school transport to Kinlochbervie and Scourie Primary Schools. The “mothballing” has meant reduced accessibility of service for parents of pre-school children, who are required to transport their children to Kinlochbervie or Scourie. It is also recognised that pupils from Achfary have less opportunity to walk or cycle to school than when Achfary School was in operation, and that there is occasional inconvenience for parents who wish to take their child to or from school during the school day.

Travel time to the service – The maximum additional travel time for school pupils is 21 minutes to Kinlochbervie – 14.9 miles.

Cost to access the service – Compared to when Achfary Primary was still open, parents of children aged 3 and 4 years have increased costs if they wish to access pre-school education.

Fuel poverty – The proposal will not have any impact on fuel poverty.

Economic impact – when the school ceased to operate in 2012, there were some negative impacts in respect of the loss of part-time employment opportunities such as school clerical and cleaning staff.

Partner service delivery – there has been no significant impact on partner service delivery to children from the change. Since the change has in practical terms already been implemented, there is no need to consult other partners.

Other options or adjustments

The above do not apply in the circumstances of a change already implemented for practical purposes.

MINUTE OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL
26 APRIL 2016

**CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE THE PROVISION OF
EDUCATION AT ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Panel

Drew Millar, Councillor (Chair)
Brian Porter, Head of Resources, Highland Council
Graham Nichols, Area Care and Learning Manager, Highland Council
Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Highland Council

11 other people attended the meeting, including the local manager of the Care and Learning Alliance, and a representative of HMIE. There were 9 parents/members of the public.

The Chairperson began by welcoming everyone to the meeting, by introducing himself as the Chair of the Council's Education, Children and Adult Services (ECAS) Committee, and also by introducing the officials present. He advised that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposal to formally close Achfary Primary School, (as set out in the recommendation to the Proposal Paper). The proposed change, if approved, will take place immediately after the conclusion of the statutory process relating to school closures. Other options identified in the proposal paper are re-opening the school, or continuing to "mothball" it. The Chairperson explained that we could also discuss any other options or alternatives to closure which those present would like to raise. We would also welcome the community's views on the best way to re-assign the catchment area of Achfary Primary School in the event that a closure is approved.

The Chairperson then asked Brian Porter, Head of Resources for Care and Learning, to describe the consultation process.

Mr Porter explained that the meeting was part of a set statutory procedure relating to a school closure. Some of those present may have had already had contact with Mr Jackson, who had held a series of informal discussions prior to the Council embarking on the statutory process. The Proposal Paper sets out a proposal to close the school, but clearly there are other options and these are identified in the paper. People are entitled to express their views on those other options, or indeed any others that the Council should be considering. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather views, and we would try to answer any questions that are raised. Any questions that cannot be answered tonight, and which require further research, will be responded to in due course. There is a very clear obligation on the Council to

consider each and every one of the comments received, including those made at the meeting tonight.

He emphasised that we were at the start of the formal process rather than at the end of it, and that the process was designed to gather the views of those affected. The school has been mothballed since the end of the 2011/12 session and we are obligated to keep mothballed schools under review. Guidance relating to the relevant legislation makes it clear that mothballing is a temporary measure.

The formal process has a number of stages and gives ample opportunity for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made. The consultation period itself runs up to 24 May, and the Council is looking for views to be submitted before that date. Once the public consultation ends on 24 May, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will look at the Proposal Paper and the note of the meeting tonight, and will form a view on the educational benefits of the proposal. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland's view on the educational benefits as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. The overall timeline is quite elongated.

Priscilla Leligdowicz asked if Mr Porter could provide an idea of timescale.

Brian Porter replied that the Council anticipates the Final Report will be submitted to a Committee meeting of 9 November. We have to publish the report at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, to allow for further representations, so the latest date for publication would be 18 October. Following that, the decision of the ECAS Committee has to be confirmed by the full Council, as a school closure decision has to be taken by the full Council, which would meet in December. That is not however the end of the process, as Scottish Ministers have a right of call-in for any school closures proposals, so even after the Council has made its decision there is a further period in which people can raise concerns with the Scottish Government, and any such representations might lead to Scottish Ministers calling-in the proposal. If the decision is called in, there would be a further review process. There is a lot of detail in the process, but an explanation is contained within the paperwork everyone has. As the process moves on we will be in touch again with relevant consultees, to advise them of progress. All told, we expect the process to take until the early part of 2017.

The Chairperson then asked Graham Nichols, Area Care and Learning Manager, to explain the educational aspects of the proposal.

Mr Nichols referred to the educational benefits section of the Proposal Paper. He did not wish to rehearse it word for word, but highlighted paragraph 11.2 and in particular numbered points 2, 3, and 9, which set out aspects of educational delivery that were very difficult to achieve in a school as small as Achfary. He set out the detail of the after-school activities available at both Scourie and Kinlochbervie that would be difficult to replicate at a re-opened Achfary. Most of all he highlighted the

importance of children having the opportunity for interaction with their peers, both for social reasons and because the Curriculum places a high value on children learning collaboratively and working in groups to self-assess. The overall conclusion was that the proposal offered educational benefits for local children, when compared to a re-opened Achfary Primary

Priscilla Leligdowicz commented that there was a high level of cooperation between the schools in the area, and **Carol-Anne Forsyth** asked why the Proposal Paper made such an issue about the relative numbers at Scourie and Kinlochbervie. Until recently Scourie had had the larger numbers and that could happen again. It seemed illogical to favour Kinlochbervie over Scourie on the basis of pupil roll.

Graham Nichols replied that he had been outlining the educational benefits of closing Achfary PS. Any subsequent re-assignment of the catchment area was a separate issue.

Katherine Barnes-Miller commented that there was general agreement about the closure of Achfary. Even a family with school age children that were currently resident in the catchment on a temporary basis, had said that if they were staying they would not send their children to Achfary Primary. The main issue that concerned people was the re-assignment of the catchment.

The Chairperson commented that the Council cannot possibly say that Achfary will definitely not re-open. The whole purpose of the meeting tonight was to listen to views about that. Any discussion about future catchments has to be within the context that Achfary may not in fact be closed. However, the Council representatives were here to listen to views. He then opened the meeting to the Q and A session.

Michele Garner, Childcare Practice Manager for the Care and Learning Alliance, made a comment in respect of paragraph 10.2 of the Proposal Paper, to highlight that there were now 4 children in Scourie Nursery, rather than 3 as stated. **Ian Jackson** responded by commenting that the 4th pupil had arrived after the paper had been written, and that published papers of this nature could only ever capture a snapshot of the position.

Katherine Barnes-Miller explained that she was a resident of Achfary, and that she is employed as a Pupil Support Auxiliary at Scourie Primary. She commented that, in its day, Achfary Primary had been great. Her own daughter had attended the school and gone on to be successful at Kinlochbervie High. However, the community simply did not have the numbers anymore. If a family with children were to move to the village, then re-opening Achfary would mean nothing more than putting siblings in a school with no other children, which would not be good for them. Realistically, there was no prospect of lots of families moving in that would make the school viable. Everyone in the community was in agreement about the proposed

closure, and if anyone wasn't they would have popped up by now to make their voice heard.

Priscilla Leligdowicz explained that she too was a resident of Achfary. She was attending the meeting on behalf of her husband, who was a member of Scourie CC but who could not attend due to ill-health. She wanted to make the point that, if the building reverted to the Estate owners, there might be a prospect of increased community use. Although there were not many people in the community, they would like to use the building, and if the school were closed the Estate might consider upgrading it.

Mrs Leligdowicz also commented that she did take issue with one of the justifications for closure given in the Proposal Paper, that *"No children have attended Achfary Primary since the end of session 2011-12."* The reason for that was the school was mothballed, so the statement raised a "chicken and egg" scenario.

Katherine Barnes-Miller commented that the school had been kept viable by pupils from Scourie who had attended Achfary on placing requests. Those children moved back to Scourie after the resolution of a particular issue of concern, and that left just one pupil in Achfary School. When the school was mothballed that pupil was told their catchment would henceforth be Scourie, so she did not see why there was now any doubt about the reassignment of the catchment. The then Head Master at Scourie was also told that he was in charge at Achfary. Kinlochberrie Primary does not have bigger numbers or better classrooms than Scourie. It is not better in any way. Both Kinlochberrie and Scourie are good schools. However, Scourie is the natural catchment for Achfary.

The Chairperson suggested it was a good thing that the Proposal Paper provided options to comment upon. Coming as an outsider to the area, it was beneficial for him to hear the views of local people. He had commented in his introduction that the Council was interested to hear the views of local people on the reassignment of the catchment. If there was a clear message from the consultation that Scourie should be the catchment, then elected Councillors would need to take account of those views. He was only a single councillor, but in his opinion the others would be foolish to ignore a clear view expressed during consultation.

The Chairperson continued by commenting that it was very important for members of the community to submit written views in response to the consultation. When the Final Report is presented to the Committee, elected members will be given a booklet with a copy of all responses received. Members will therefore have an opportunity to read all the comments received, and it is vital that anyone with an opinion submits it in writing.

Carol-Anne Forsyth advised that, as Chairperson of the Scourie PS Parent Council, she had emailed the other parents at Scourie about the proposed closure, and everyone who responded agreed with the proposal. Firstly, it was a waste of

Highland Council money to keep a building mothballed when there were no children in Achfary and no likelihood of any children in the next 2/3 years. Numbers in Scourie are dropping and this has also happened in the past to Kinlochbervie. Closing Achfary would be of benefit to maintaining the rolls of Scourie and Kinlochbervie. Keeping Achfary open would be a waste of money when Highland Council is making cuts everywhere else.

Dylan Bentley asked how the Suitability and Condition ratings are calculated. He himself was happy with Scourie School. As part of the consultation, could all the parents of Scourie be contacted for their views?

Carol-Anne Forsyth commented that she had already spoken to some parents and would be contacting all the others. **Dylan Bentley** asked whether those views would be officially recorded, and **Brian Porter** confirmed that all views expressed in consultation would be recorded and responded to.

Priscilla Leligdowicz suggested that, if Kinlochbervie was chosen to receive the Achfary catchment, there would be fears locally about the future of Scourie Primary.

Dylan Bentley commented that, if in the future a couple of families moved to Achfary, those numbers could be very important to Scourie. He asked why we were changing the catchment from Scourie to Kinlochbervie.

Ian Jackson commented that Highland Council had no plans to close Scourie Primary. Whilst no-one could say what would happen in years to come, any school closure proposal has to go through the same process that is underway for Achfary, and that should be some reassurance to parents. On the question of catchment, he commented that as Achfary Primary is not closed, it still has a catchment. The Council was not proposing to move part of the Scourie catchment into Kinlochbervie. It was the Achfary catchment that was being discussed.

Carol-Anne Forsyth reiterated that the arrangement at the time Achfary was mothballed was that pupils should attend Scourie. If a child turned up in Achfary tomorrow they would be offered a place in Scourie Primary, not Kinlochbervie.

Graham Nichols commented that Katherine Barnes-Miller had accurately described the history. Pupils had been attending Achfary on placing requests, and when they decided to move back to their designated school in Scourie, that left only one pupil in the Achfary catchment. When the school was mothballed the parents of the one remaining child indicated a preference to attend Kinlochbervie, but the Council were only willing to provide transport to Scourie.

Katherine Barnes-Miller asked whether the current meeting was the only one to be held as part of the consultation. When this was confirmed, she highlighted that there were no representatives from Kinlochbervie School or community at the meeting, indicating that Kinlochbervie felt little connection with Achfary.

Ian Jackson returned to the earlier question about the Suitability rating for Scourie, which had not been answered. He advised that the Council is required by the Scottish Government to assess all its schools for Suitability, and to rate them according to a scale of A-D. The assessment considered the design of the school and what facilities it had, and encompassed the classrooms, the gym hall, the office and other ancillary accommodation, and the playground. Disabled access was an important part of the assessment. There are guidelines for the award of ratings. He added that the Highland Council aims to have all its schools rated as at least “B”, so some thought needs to be given to addressing any lower rating.

Carol-Anne Forsyth asked why, in the light of this, the Council had not addressed the disabled access issues at Scourie Primary when the nursery conversion had taken place. Disabled access was created for the nursery as part of that project, but was not extended to the school. Surely it would have been more efficient to have addressed the access issues across the school building, rather than returning to Scourie at some point in the future.

Brian Porter advised that he would look into the matter further.

Steve Rudley challenged the comment in the Proposal paper, that Scourie was “marginally” closer to Achfary than to Kinlochbervie. It was quite a bit closer. He also challenged the roll projections, suggesting that it was impossible to project primary school rolls to 2030.

Ian Jackson commented that the further into the future the figures go, the less robust they become. The Council feels it has reasonably robust data for the next few years. Figures for future years are based on historic rolls plus anticipated housebuilding, which is why they tend to rise over time.

Some discussion followed about the accuracy of the projections for Scourie Primary. There was general agreement that the roll projections for the next few years were as accurate as they could be.

Carol-Anne Forsyth highlighted an error at paragraph 19.2, which referred to funded school transport from Scourie. This was acknowledged as a typing error that should have referred to Achfary.

Dylan Bentley asked whether there was a trigger number for the roll at Scourie, at which the Council would look to invest to raise it to a “B” rating.

Ian Jackson commented that there was no trigger number, but that there were a lot of schools, and limited funds.

Carol-Anne Forsyth commented that in that case we should not have wasted money on the Achfary building for the last 3 years. If Achfary had been closed 3 years ago the money saved could have been invested in Scourie Primary. There

was also the matter of the £125K invested in converting a room in Scourie into a nursery, with 4 sinks for a minimal number of children.

Brian Porter responded that the comment about mothballing was a legitimate point, but that the Council's process had been to mothball, with dialogue with the community at the time. A decision to move to formal closure in 2012 might have been seen by the local community as precipitate, and the Council had wanted to monitor the demographics of the area before coming to a final view on the future of the school. Arguably we might have brought the closure proposal forward sooner, but we were there or thereabouts with the 3 year guideline figure suggested by the Scottish Government.

Neil MacDonald commented that the current process must be the easiest school closure ever undertaken, since everyone is in agreement with the proposal, and the Council does not even own the school building. The only issue of concern to people was the reassignment of the catchment. Moving the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie does feel like a nail in the coffin for Scourie Primary. Kinlochbervie should not be favoured over Scourie, or Durness for that matter. There was concern locally that the Council would be tempted to create a single school in Kinlochbervie for the entire area. That would be "nice and tidy" for the Council, but would mean children from the other catchments having excessively long journeys to school, all the way from Kylesku in the south to Eriboll in the north. Unapool School was closed 15 or so years ago and with Achfary going too, the area will have lost 2 primary schools out of an original 5. Communities that are struggling do not need school closures on top of everything else.

The Chairperson reiterated that he and the Council officials were at the meeting to gauge local opinion. There was no pre-judgment involved and that is why was important that views were expressed, both at the meeting and in writing. When the councillors come to take their decision on the proposal, they will do so after consideration of the comments received.

The Chairperson added that he would defend the Council over the decision 3 years ago to mothball rather than close Achfary, as he has had experience of a school where there was only 1 pupil, but where local people expressed the view that the school should be kept open, so the school was mothballed rather than closed. He repeated that it was imperative that those present set out their views in writing. He added however, that we were not proposing the closure of Scourie Primary.

Katherine Barnes-Miller asked whether it would be better to submit one letter or many different letters.

The Chairperson said that personally, as someone who had to read all the responses, he would prefer a single letter, as long as it was signed by everyone. There are about 40 councillors on the Committee and every one of them will receive

copies of all responses, so a single letter would save paper. However the decision lay with each individual.

Aileen MacDonald asked whether it was still possible that the recommendation relating to catchment might change. **The Chairperson** confirmed that was so.

Carol-Anne Forsyth asked whether there would be another meeting with parents at Scourie to discuss disabled access to the school.

The Chairperson suggested that the parents get in touch with the 3 local ward members, and invite them to a future Parent Council meeting to outline their concerns.

Carol-Anne Forsyth asked what would happen to the money saved by closing Achfary Primary.

The Chairperson advised this would be treated as part of the Council's overall revenue budget.

Katherine Barnes-Miller suggested there should be another meeting about the change to the Scourie catchment. Surely changing a catchment area should be subject to the same process as closing Achfary.

Brian Porter commented that the Council was not changing the Scourie catchment. The Proposal paper contained a suggestion about the future of the Achfary catchment, and there would be an eventual recommendation about this to the Committee. Whilst there was a clear consensus at tonight's meeting, he did not know whether there would be other written representations with a different view. That was why it was important that those present followed up their comments tonight with written responses.

Ian Jackson commented that Education Scotland would be visiting the school as part of their assessment of the Proposal, and that there was an opportunity for parents to make views known to the Inspector. He also highlighted the fact that the Final Report will be published at least 3 weeks before the Committee that considers it, and that is to allow further representations to be made, concerning the content of the Final Report.

Sally Stewart advised that the Education Scotland Inspector would make contact with the Head Teachers prior to his visit, and would offer the Chairperson of the Parent Council an opportunity to meet.

There being no other comments, the Chairperson reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 24 May – and of where responses should be sent, either via letter or via email. A record of this meeting would be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee on 9 November 2016, as well as all the submissions. The members of

the Committee would have a chance to see the note and all other representations before the meeting. Following the decision of the Committee, the minutes would be submitted to the full Council for ratification, most likely in December.

MEETING CLOSED.

**List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation Exercise – Closure of Achfary
Primary School**

1. Dr. Jean Balfour
2. Scourie Community Council
3. Summary of Pupil Responses Scourie Primary School
4. Summary of Pupil Responses Kinlochbervie Primary School
5. Covering Email and Petition from Scourie Community Council

20 April 2016

Mr Barry Northedge
Area Quality Improvement Manager
Care and Learning Service
Highland Council Offices
Drummuie
Golspie
KW10 6TA

RECEIVED

22 APR 2016

The Highland Council
Drummuie

Dear Mr Northedge

The Future of Primary Schools in the North West Sutherland

The case for closure of Achfary is understood. As is pointed out children from Achfary (while "moth balled") have been going to Scourie. There is a recognition that closing the school in Achfary has benefits for the Achfary residents in the use of the school building for other purposes, and it is not suggested that closure will give children any major problems.

The question of importance is whether children should be re-routed to Scourie or Kinlochbervie. In considering this, future demands and developments in the whole area should be considered. Such a decision over schools now will affect future planning.

Generally speaking, the Achfary catchment links in with Scourie - as well as being slightly closer than it is to Kinlochbervie. This should not be ignored especially where the youngest children are concerned.

Some consideration should be given to the future and any possible new or existing developments. School provision can be an important factor where future investment possibilities are being considered. In Scourie Loch Duart

(Fish Farm) is an important employer with a significant number of employees built up over time. It is also expected to build the new Geo Park Centre in Scourie (land has just been acquired for this development) which will provide facilities for the internationally known Shelley Collection. This will be of educational benefit to the area, as well as bringing more people to Scourie.

The hotel expansion at Kylesku and linked activities is also bringing increased activity to the south of Scourie and further from Kinlochbervie.

At present there will be a fall in pupils in August 2016 from 16 to 9, in Kinlochbervie from 24 to 23. Forward figures suggest the numbers in both primary schools will become similar. Both schools have adequate accommodation for expanded use above current low points. (It should be noted that the population living in the school catchment area of Scourie increased by 4% and in the same period (2001/2011) Kinlochbervie reduced by 6%.) This suggests that though with fluctuations inevitable in schools in scattered areas, a reasonable long term stability of numbers in Scourie without considering new development particularly if the Achfary potential is added.

It would therefore seem sensible to direct the Achfary catchment to Scourie.

1. There are shorter travel links.
2. More family links.
3. There are proposed developments at Scourie which will effect school populations of the future. It is therefore important to maintain the school and its proper development, during the current period in which the Achfary catchment can help.

Such a decision will allow all existing schools to continue as at present.

Barry Northedge
Area Quality Improvement Manager
Care & Learning Service
Highland Council Offices
Drummuie
Golspie
KW10 6TA

The Highland Council
Drummuie

15th May 2016

Dear Mr Northedge

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE EDUCATION PROVISION
AT ACHFARY PRIMARY SCHOOL

I refer to the letter dated 11th April 2016, received from Graham Nichols, Area Care & Learning Manager (North), in connection with the above matter. Following receipt of this letter, the proposed closure of Achfary Primary School, and the longer-term implications thereof for Scourie Primary School, were discussed in some detail at the most recent meeting of Scourie & District Community Council. I have therefore been asked to write on behalf of Scourie & District Community Council with our considered response to the Highland Council's proposals, as referred to in Graham Nichols' letter.

In essence, the Members of Scourie & District Community Council are unanimous in their view that there are far-reaching consequences of the proposal to change the catchment of Achfary (currently, pupils attend Scourie Primary School) to Kinlochbervie, even although Scourie is actually closer to Achfary with a shorter distance of transport. If this change were to be effected, it was felt that there would be far-reaching consequences for the future viability of Scourie Primary School. As a matter of information, it is anticipated that proposed developments being planned for the Scourie area will have a positive impact on future populations of Scourie Primary School. In the meantime, it is regarded as vital that pupils from Achfary continue to attend Scourie, in order to maintain the long-term viability of Scourie Primary School and support its continued development.

I am therefore instructed to tell you that Scourie & District Community Council is unanimously opposed to this particular aspect of the proposed closure and we strongly urge The Highland Council to reconsider.

Yours sincerely

Option	total	
1 (close Achfary)	7	It will be lonely there. There is only one primary person in Achfary. It would be lonely there and would give more people to us. Because people aren't going. Miss Gill isn't there anymore and she was really friendly
2 (re-open Achfary)	0	
3 (keep Achfary mothballed)	2	You never know if more people might move to Achfary. Because people might move to Achfary.

Move to

Option	total	
Scourie	7	All people are nice, it is very safe and it has a good pitch. There are hardly any people in Scourie School We have a big football pitch. We have less pupils than KLB We have our own canteen, big classrooms and a play area. There are lots of nice people here, the teachers are really nice. It's a great school. We need more people
KLB	2	There's lots of friends you can make there and it's a nice school. So is Scourie but it's a small school, only 7 will be there soon. There are more classes and play areas there.

Anything else?

Scourie is a friendly place and it has a great school.
--

The infants all thought they should close the school and if any children came come to Scourie – but I don't think they really got the implications of the options!

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Achfary to go to Kinlochbervie Primary or Scourie Primary, instead of Achfary Primary.

Now we have to decide what to do for the future. We have 3 choices:

1. Close Achfary Primary for good, with the pupils going to Kinlochbervie Primary or Scourie Primary instead.
2. Re-open Achfary Primary, so pupils from there would go to that school and not to Kinlochbervie or Scourie.
3. Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer before we decide for good.

Which idea do you think is best? In the table below, place a tick next to which one you think is best.

Idea No. 1 – Close Achfary Primary.	Majority think this.
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Achfary Primary.	
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	

2. Why did you give the answer above?

- Not too far to travel
- Increases the numbers in the other schools
- Better for social skills and more friends

3. If the Council did close Achfary Primary, which school do you think the Achfary pupils should go to? Place a tick next to the school you think we should choose

Scourie Primary	Allow a choice
Kinlochbervie Primary	Allow a choice

4. Why did you give the answer above?

Depends on distance from school

5. Is there anything else you want to tell Highland Council about, that would help us make the right choice?

Thank you for asking the pupils. We were pleased to be asked.

Tina Lear

To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: FW: Achfary catchment area
Attachments: achfary petition.jpg; achfary petition2.jpg; achfary petition-3.jpg; achfary petition-achfary.jpg; achfary petition- kylestrome.jpg

From:
Sent: 23 May 2016 12:18
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Achfary catchment area

Dear Graham,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am writing to you in regards to the meeting we had on Tuesday 26th April 2016 in Achfary hall.

It was brought to our attention that the Highland Council are considering changing the catchment area of Achfary from Scourie to Kinlochbervie.

Having discussed this with parents of Scourie Primary and Scourie, Achfary and surrounding areas, we are opposed to this change. We have put together a few points showing the reasons and benefits to why the catchment area should stay with Scourie. I have also received over 80 signatures to show how much the community are in agreement with this, which reflects how strongly they feel too.

Points are as follows:

1. First and foremost since Achfary was mothballed three years ago, any child living in the Achfary catchment have had Highland Council paid transport to Scourie, whereas, parents have had to fund their own transport to Kinlochbervie, so why the change of plan?
2. Come August our school's role drops to nine pupils, therefore, our primary would benefit from any new members coming into the Achfary catchment area.
3. Scourie nursery's role has increased this coming August to seven children showing that the number of children in Scourie primary will be improving.
4. Achfary Estate is linked with Kylestrome Estate and so keeping the children of these families in the same school would allow the children to mix with each other in and out of school helping building a strong community bond.
5. Achfary, Scourie and Kylestrome already function as a strong working community.
6. Scourie primary is closer in miles and driving time to Achfary than Kinlochbervie.
7. In the winter period the road to Scourie is better when the bad weather is upon us, this could lead to poorer school attendance and affect grades.
8. The school is in the process of undergoing Highland Council reviews and due to this, have been working closely with inspectors to improve the school and all aspects of learning and development.

9. Scourie school currently offers children a number of extra activities- violin lessons, chanter lessons, afterschool gardening club, craft club and chess club, there is also an outstanding school band which has won awards at music festivals on several occasions.

10. As a community, Scourie can also offer children other activities including jujitsu, football club, table tennis and exercise class.

11. Scourie community is in full support in keeping our village the catchment area for Achfary.

I have attached the signatures on the petition which was drawn up; this clearly shows the support the community have given.

Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon.

Closure of Achfary Primary School
& reassignment of its catchment area.

We, the undersigned, are in favour of the permanent closure of Achfary Primary School, but feel that the catchment area should come under that of Scourie Primary School, not Kinlochbervie Primary School as stated in the Highland Council proposal paper.

Name	Address	Signature
LESLEY CHERRY		
FIONA JOHNSTON		
Linda Macdonald		
SHONA MARSHALL		
IONA SHAW		
DYLAN BENTLEY		
CAROLANNE FORSYTH		
Ellen Parker		
ROBBIE NORTHWAY		
MOG MCCALL		
WYNN MACDONALD		
GINA FLETT		
AUDREY MACKAY		
ASHLEIGH KENNEDY		
Jane Macdonald		
Matthew Highways		
Neil Hathaway		
James Flett		
T. ANN MACKENZIE		
Philippa Edwards		
DUNCAN MORRISON		

Closure of Achfary Primary School
& reassignment of its catchment area.

We, the undersigned, are in favour of the permanent closure of Achfary Primary School, but feel that the catchment area should come under that of Scourie Primary School, not Kinlochbervie Primary School as stated in the Highland Council proposal paper.

Name	Address	Signature
Wendy Fisher		
PAM LUCAS		
REBECCA MACINNES		
Dana Flett		
JILL PATTEN		
LIAM FLETT		
Christine Blythe Donald		
James Fryer		
Ewan Johnston		
Bruce Swanson		
Archie Tomlinson		
Irene Gormley		
David Jenkins		
Hannah Weaver		
Wendy Morrison		
Paul		
Jack Hetherill		
Holly Tebay		
Gemma Flett		
Klaudia Klodzimska		

Beata Klodzimska

MARIUSZ KLODZIMSKI

Closure of Achfary Primary School
& reassignment of its catchment area.

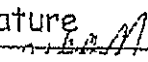
We, the undersigned, are in favour of the permanent closure of Achfary Primary School, but feel that the catchment area should come under that of Scourie Primary School, not Kinlochbervie Primary School as stated in the Highland Council proposal paper.

Name	Address	Signature
Be Miller		
Donal Amis.		
Christy Macintyre		
DAVID CUTHERBERTSON		
Helen Macdonald		
ADAM BEYNON-JONES		
Cullen Martin		
G. UGLIGDOWITZ		
Hannah Tebbutt		
John Rustie		
JOAN RUSKIE		
Finlay Macdonald		
ROBERT KINIC		
Heather Aida		
Billy Aida		
Hilkie Elliot		
Vivien Barnes		
Karin Beames		
PRISCILLA RUSKIE		
PATRICIA KING		

Closure of Achfary Primary School

& reassignment of its catchment area.

We, the undersigned, are in favour of the permanent closure of Achfary Primary School, but feel that the catchment area should come under that of Scourie Primary School, not Kinlochbervie Primary School as stated in the Highland Council proposal paper.

Name	Address	Signature
CRAIG HATHERALL		
Lewis Falconer	1	
Sandy Morrison		
Iain Allison		
NEIL MACDONALD		
Cowan Ross		
Maurice Fyfe		

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School.

1. Introduction

This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.1 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 26 April 2016 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related

consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal including a meeting with Scourie and District Community Council; and
- visits to the site of Achfary Primary School, Kinlochbervie Primary School, Kinlochbervie Nursery, Scourie Primary School and Scourie Nursery including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.3 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to the closure of Achfary Primary School the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The Highland Council undertook the consultation between 11 April and 24 May 2016. A public meeting held at Achfary Primary School on 26 April 2016 was attended by nine members of the public. Children at Scourie and Kinlochbervie Primary Schools were given the opportunity to discuss the proposal and have their views recorded at separate meetings held in their schools. Those who attended the public meeting and those who made written responses were not opposed to the closure of Achfary Primary School. They were concerned that the proposal could result in a rezoning of the Achfary catchment area to Kinlochbervie Primary School rather than Scourie Primary School. The Highland Council received three written responses to the consultation, including a petition from Scourie Parent Council signed by 82 people opposing the proposed reassignment of the Achfary school catchment area to Kinlochbervie Primary School.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Achfary Primary School is a rural school accommodated within Achfary Village Hall. The building is leased from Reay Forest Estate by The Highland Council. No children have attended Achfary Primary School since 2011/12. A single pupil residing in the Achfary catchment area currently attends Kinlochbervie Primary School. School roll forecasts indicate a maximum roll of two pupils by 2019/20.

3.2 The Highland Council provides a clear and persuasive set of educational benefits in its proposal to close the school. By attending another school, children will be able to learn with a group of their peers. It would be difficult to offer only one or two children a full experience of the curriculum including a wider range of learning activities such as sport, drama and music in Achfary Primary School. Children would benefit from improved opportunities for social interaction and to learn skills through working together. This would not be possible with the current and forecasted pupil

roll numbers at Achfary Primary School. The building has significant limitations for use as a modern school. The council gave appropriate consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closing the school. These included re-opening Achfary Primary School either with its current or an extended catchment area or to continue with the current mothballing arrangement. Population forecasts for the area do not make the alternatives viable or cost effective.

3.3 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors in both Kinlochbervie Primary School and Scourie Primary School accepted the need to close the school. Whilst regretting the loss of a local school, they saw merit in the educational benefits presented in The Highland Council's consultation document. However, stakeholders in Scourie Primary School disagreed with The Highland Council's proposal to reassign the Achfary catchment to Kinlochbervie Primary School. They were of the view that Achfary has more natural area links to Scourie including employment links through Reay Forest Estate and Loch Duart fish farm. They were concerned about the area's population decline and the falling school roll in Scourie. They felt that The Highland Council's proposal could make it more difficult to attract families to the area and could therefore make Scourie Primary School more vulnerable in the future. Achfary Primary School is located within the Scourie and District Community Council area. Members of the community council were working with others on initiatives to develop the local economy and address population decline. Members who spoke with HM Inspectors felt strongly that Achfary should be zoned to Scourie Primary School.

3.4 The Highland Council includes detailed information on catchment areas in its proposal paper. Achfary Primary School is marginally closer to Scourie Primary School than Kinlochbervie Primary School. However, the school building at Kinlochbervie currently offers a better standard of accommodation than Scourie Primary School. It is categorised as condition B whilst Scourie Primary School is classified as condition C. Scourie currently has limitations regarding disabled access which need to be addressed through the council's capital and maintenance programmes. Kinlochbervie Primary School currently has 24 children on the roll, a larger roll than Scourie Primary School which has nine children, thus affording more opportunities for children to learn in age appropriate peer groups.

3.5 The council's consultation document specifically seeks the community's views on the best way to reassign the catchment area of Achfary Primary School. Almost all stakeholders in Scourie who responded to the consultation in writing and those who spoke with HM Inspectors were strongly of the view that the Achfary Primary School catchment should be reassigned to Scourie Primary School. The Highland Council will need to consider these views carefully when taking forward its final proposal document. In the longer term, the educational benefits between assigning the Achfary Primary School catchment to either Kinlochbervie Primary School or Scourie Primary School are evenly balanced. The roll of Scourie Primary School is set to rise to 20 by 2023 and Kinlochbervie roll is projected to fall to 17 in the same period. The Highland Council will need to carry out necessary works to bring the standard of accommodation in Scourie Primary School to category B regardless of

the decision on the reassignment of Achfary Primary School catchment area. Both schools already work together along with Durness Primary School within the Kinlochbervie High School cluster including extending opportunities for peer groups to learn together.

4. Summary

4.1 The Highland Council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Achfary Primary School, reassigning its catchment area to that of Kinlochbervie Primary School, has clear educational benefits. The proposal will enable the few children from Achfary to learn with their peers and benefit from social interaction. They could access a more appropriate range of opportunities within the curriculum than would be the case at Achfary Primary School.

4.2 The Highland Council will need to consider the views provided by stakeholders at Scourie Primary School that Achfary Primary School catchment should be reassigned to Scourie Primary School.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
June 2016**