



HIGHLAND COUNCIL

CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AT KINBRACE PRIMARY SCHOOL, DIVIDING ITS CATCHMENT AREA BETWEEN THOSE OF HELMSDALE AND MELVICH PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

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

- To discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools

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 Kinbrace Primary School on 22 June 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.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Highland Council's Education, Children and Adult Services Committee (ECAS), at its meeting on 18 May 2016, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to discontinue the provision of education at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools.
- 1.2 **Appendix 1** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal. **Appendices A - O** are the appendices to the original proposal.
- 1.3 Kinbrace Primary School has been "mothballed" since the end of session 2012-13. Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of 5 by 2019-20, but information gathered during the consultation exercise suggests that in practice it is unlikely there would be more than 3 pupils on the roll. A roll of this size impedes the successful delivery of the curriculum and hampers social interaction opportunities for children.

- 1.4 Since July 2013 pupils from the Kinbrace Primary catchment have attended Helmsdale Primary, 17 miles from Kinbrace Primary itself. Highland Council considers that these arrangements have been of benefit to the pupils at both schools.
- 1.5 The school has a planning capacity of 25. The notional school roll of 5 by 2019-20 would therefore represent 20% use of capacity, whilst the probable roll of 3 would represent 12% use of capacity.
- 1.6 Kinbrace Primary School is designated as a rural school under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. In that context, the Council has had 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 17 of the Proposal Paper (**Appendix 1**) and is further considered at Sections 7 and 9 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 15 of the Proposal Paper, (**Appendix 1**) and reconsidered again in the light of responses received to consultation – see Sections 5 and 9 below.

2.0 Consultation process

- 2.1 The formal consultation period ran from Monday 30 May 2016 to Wednesday 24 August 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 Kinbrace Primary School, and parents of pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
 - (ii) Pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, including the pupils from the Kinbrace PS catchment area;

- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) The Parent Councils of Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School.
- (vi) Staff of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and of Farr and Golspie High Schools.
- (vii) Trade Union representatives;
- (viii) The community councils for the areas covered by the schools;
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (x) Local Youth Convenor.

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

2.4 A public meeting was held in Kinbrace on the 22 June 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 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at Appendix 3. There were 10 written responses (not including the pupil questionnaires) plus the one written response received out of time. Copies of these responses can also be found at Appendix 3.

4.2 The views of pupils at Helmsdale Primary School (which included pupils living within the Kinbrace catchment area) were sought by means of an age adapted questionnaire completed by the pupils. Copies of the questionnaires returned are at **Appendix 3**.

5.0 Issues raised during the consultation period

5.1 There were a total of 56 pupil responses. Pupils were given 3 options; i. Close Kinbrace ii. Re-open Kinbrace, or iii. Keep Kinbrace mothballed.

5.2 Of the total pupil responses, 17 pupils were in favour of closure, with another 17 opting to keep the status quo for longer. A further 22 pupils indicated a preference to reopen Kinbrace School.

5.3 Arguments put forward by pupils supporting the closure were:

- Because then we could get a new school here.
- They might be lonely.
- They can play with us
- Then people will get more friends.
- I don't want to go to Kinbrace School.
- We have lots of people in our school and that school might have none.
- I like this school because the school is really pretty, it's better than my old school.
- We can make more friends.
- It would be weird to open a school for just three pupils.
- We like having people coming down from the Strath because we can play together and make new friends.
- They'll have fun and we'll have fun playing together, like football and stuff and it's really nice that they're coming here.
- So that the children can look for new friends.
- If it closes we can get more boys and girls in our school.
- It is costing loads of money to keep it open when there are only 1-2 pupils and that money could pay another teacher in another school.
- They should shut it down because the school doesn't have a lot of pupils. Hardly anyone will go to it.
- Close Kinbrace Primary because what's the point in opening the school again to only teach about 10 children.
- They should shut it down because there are only 4 people in the school.
- People like it here and if they opened it most people would probably just stay in Helmsdale.
- If they open it then people going to Helmsdale or Melvich won't have as many friends plus it would be a waste of money as there are only a few people.
- They could get more people to learn in school.
- It would be pointless if only 3 or 4 kids go to Kinbrace School.
- It would be hard for the Strath children to change schools and make new friends

5.4 The arguments put forward by pupils who supported keeping the school mothballed are summarised below together with the responses from the Council. Individual issues raised that are similar to one another have been "grouped."

Issue 1

We need to take more time to make a better decision. Things might change.

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 Kinbrace Primary were re-opened, it would be as a single teacher school with a very small roll.

- 5.5 The arguments put forward by pupils who supported re-opening the school are summarised below. Individual issues raised that are similar to one another have been “grouped.”

Issue 2

Because I don't have to go on a bus to get there, I can ride on my bike because it's easier.

If we re-open Kinbrace we won't need a school bus.

Some people who aren't close to our school can go to Kinbrace School.

Kinbrace Primary should re-open because it will be a shorter distance for people who live up in Kildonan instead of driving to Helmsdale Primary.

It is unfair for the Kinbrace children to have to travel so far to school.

It would be better for the Kinbrace children not to have to travel so far.

Response 2

The original Proposal Paper acknowledged that the main adverse effect for children is the length of journey from Kinbrace to Helmsdale, details of which were provided. This adverse effect must be set against the educational benefits that the proposal could deliver.

Issue 3

We can go to that school to play games.

Response 3

Helmsdale Primary is part of an Associated School Group (ASG) and already has links with other schools in the ASG, particularly for sports activities.

Issue 4

The children from Kinbrace might not know what Helmsdale School is about.

Response 4

As Kinbrace Primary has been mothballed since 2013, the children have adjusted to attending Helmsdale Primary.

Issue 5

It would be nice to open it so children can go there if they live in Kinbrace.

If it re-opened then there would be another school.

Response 5

The low population density of Highland means that schools cannot be located in every community. The proposal is being advanced on the basis of educational benefit for children in Kinbrace.

Issue 6

So our school doesn't get busy and not that noisy.

Response 6

Helmsdale Primary is currently operating at 50% of its capacity. The addition of the very small number of children from the Kinbrace catchment will not make Helmsdale Primary too busy or too noisy.

Issue 7

The school should re-open because soon we will not have enough transport.

Response 7

The Highland Council is legally obliged to arrange and fund transport for any pupil who is travelling beyond the statutory walking distance to the designated school for their address. Appropriate transport arrangements would be put in place in the event the number of children requiring transport increased beyond the capacity of the current vehicle.

- 5.6 There were a total of 10 written responses received from parents and other stakeholders during the consultation period. Seven of the letters actively opposed any re-opening of Kinbrace School and did not express opposition to the closure proposal. Two letters expressed opposition to the proposed closure whilst acknowledging that there were insufficient numbers to justify re-opening the school at present. Both these responses argued in favour of continuing to mothball the school. One further letter expressed opposition to closure and suggested either re-opening the school or continuing to mothball.
- 5.7 One further response was received outwith the statutory consultation period, from Helmsdale Community Council. The Community Council did not oppose the closure proposal but expressed concern on two particular points, which are included in the issues identified below.
- 5.7 As can be seen from **Appendix 2**, only three questions were raised at the public meeting, and all were points of clarification.

5.8 The main arguments advanced in support of the Council's proposal were as follows:

- Moving children from Helmsdale into a small school like Kinbrace would be detrimental to them, not only socially but educationally as well.
- With a projected roll of 5 pupils by 2019, the children would not benefit socially or on the sporting front.
- The children would not have a school canteen.
- There would only be one child in nursery. There would be no social interaction and children would not enjoy the same range of activities that are available in Helmsdale.
- The financial document in the consultation suggests that re-opening Kinbrace School would cost almost £32000 per child per year. This money could be better invested elsewhere in education.
- Both schools would lose out as they do not have a Head Teacher on site every day and it would be difficult for the Head Teacher to balance time between both schools.
- Children could end up being together 24/7, in the same classroom, playground and home environment.
- Children in Kinbrace would only ever have one teacher for the remainder of their primary education. Potentially they would not benefit from visiting specialist teachers or be offered music tuition, which is available at Helmsdale PS.
- The cost per head to educate a child seems ludicrous in the current financial climate.
- Are funds ring fenced for Kinbrace to reopen or would the council have to make further savings?
- PSA and cleaning time hours across Highland have been cut, could this lead to further cuts?
- How would the Head Teacher split her time? Previously the HT spent 2 days in Kinbrace per week, if this was still the case it would be out of sync if it was considered on how many children attended each school.
- The clerical time for Kinbrace is noted as 16 hours, Helmsdale only has 18 – how is this calculated?
- Would you manage to recruit someone for Kinbrace? What would happen if not, would the HT be forced to teach until someone was appointed?
- Would Helmsdale lose out on time with specialist teachers? I.e. ASN, PE, Art (the latter 2 are for CCR and we understand this is not applicable in Kinbrace until there is a child in P4 and above). Would children who attended Kinbrace have the offer of music tuition as they do in Helmsdale?
- Do the children who attend Helmsdale PS and are already settled, who are in the Kinbrace catchment have the choice of continuing their education in Helmsdale? Surely it is more beneficial socially for the children to attend Helmsdale PS.
- Academically the children will always have to work within the same groups for group work / pair work, this allows for no variation and the possibility of one child overpowering the other, stunting their educational growth. In Helmsdale partners could vary and children may feel more in their comfort zone.

- How can the children learn competitive sport etc if there are so few of them?
- Would all children from Helmsdale and Kinbrace not benefit from having one school i.e. better resources?
- The children could possibly lose out on after school activities. Have the children who attended Kinbrace prior to mothballing been asked how they felt it impacted their life / education (these children are now in High School)? Whilst there is sympathy that children who would be in the Kinbrace catchment have a longer school day due to the travelling, there is no reason to believe it has impacted negatively on them.
- Will the roads continue to be gritted in winter?
- Re-opening Kinbrace could hinder education and opportunities for the rest of the children at Helmsdale P.S. Lowering the general numbers of the school may affect the provision offered to the pupils, such as a playground supervisor (which only got appointed after the number of pupils reached 50), as well as the additional member of canteen staff. This would result in unsupervised play, less adult impact and encouragement in games, and a longer lunch queue - negatively affecting the pupil's enjoyment of their lunch time break.
- Lowering the numbers of pupils at Helmsdale could result in losing a teacher, classes becoming oversized and limiting the opportunities for activities within the classroom. Because of class sizes it could result in splitting and separating children of the same age and year group within different classes, meaning children of the same age may have more limited opportunities.
- Having a school as small as Kinbrace may make it hard to reach aspects of the curriculum due to small numbers. Children will have fewer opportunities to socialise and when they reach High School age they will need to travel regardless - only without the prior relationships with other pupils.
- The money used to reopen Kinbrace could be better spent benefiting all the pupils by providing more resources to the Helmsdale Primary School - such as more computers as currently they have a limited amount. Helmsdale as a Primary School should be of a high standard before opening another school, and opening another school to benefit a small number of pupils should not affect the majority already settled within their school environment
- The costs that would be incurred to re-open are not sustainable in the present economic climate.
- We are losing PSA, cleaners' and janitors' hours all over the Highlands - how can it be possible to justify re-opening a school at such great cost, especially when the prospective pupils concerned are already attending and fully integrated in Helmsdale Primary.
- How many hours would Helmsdale Primary lose our already hard pressed head teacher for?
- Would Mrs Gill be willing to continue as a cluster head, managing two schools with all the extra work involved? If not then we would have more disruption at Helmsdale.
- Would the resources at Helmsdale be diminished? Would we lose visiting teacher hours - PE etc?
- Where will the extra money to open Kinbrace come from? Would it even be possible to attract a suitable candidate to teach there?
- Apart from the travelling time for the children involved, it is hard to see what other benefits are to be had from going to a smaller school. So much learning

is done nowadays through group activities and socialising that it would actually be to the detriment of the children involved.

- To re-open Kinbrace would be a drain on resources we cannot afford.
- The social and emotional well-being of the Kinbrace pupils is not best served by being educated in such a small group.
- The subsequent reduction in roll at Helmsdale Primary school if pupils were to be educated in Kinbrace instead would reduce class sizes in Helmsdale, reducing the choice of friends for the children there and possibly impacting on the number and distribution of teaching and support staff within Helmsdale, which would be detrimental to the academic and social education of all of the pupils involved.
- It would be difficult to recruit a long term member of staff to teach in Kinbrace, resulting in a succession of supply teachers for the Kinbrace pupils, which would not best serve the educational needs of those children.
- There are not enough educational or social benefits to the re-opening of Kinbrace school to make it worthwhile spending the considerable sums of money necessary to re-open and maintain the school, in the current economic climate I believe that this money would be much better spent if it were allocated to more LSA hours, or improved resources (or even better a couple of additional teachers) within the currently open schools in Sutherland.
- Kinbrace School should not be re-opened. There are not enough children to justify this and the money could be better spent elsewhere on education. It is also important for children in rural areas to interact with other children as much as possible to prepare them for high school etc
- To have a school costing upwards of £130,000 to open for 4 children would be a gross waste of public money, especially considering the financial pressures the Education Department is under. It would be cheaper to send the children to boarding school.
- There are benefits to having a diverse group of peers, where children learn to socialise, emotionally and intellectually, by co-operating and sharing activities, resources and ideas. There are 4 children affected here, one of whom is still in the nursery, so that child would be in a solitary situation, while the remaining three would be in the unhappy position of "two being company and three being a crowd" - there would invariably be (given human nature) one child left out, regardless of the best efforts of the teacher. Also with this number brainstorming ideas are limited to the life experiences of three children in similarly isolated areas, so they cannot benefit from the culture capital of a variety of peers from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- It is suggested that the children, if travelling to Helmsdale, may miss out on education in the winter months due to the road being closed in bad weather - in fact, unless the teacher was living in Kinbrace the school would still be shut, since if children could not get to Helmsdale then a teacher driving to work would, in all likelihood be unable to reach Kinbrace.

5.9 The main arguments put forward by those opposed to closure are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. Where different responses raise similar issues these have been "grouped" for the purposes of the response.

Issue 8

The Council's Proposal contains its own self-fulfilling prophecy. The more the Council reduces services in this area, the less tolerable and attractive life becomes for those who live here or who might require to do so. The more difficult life becomes, the fewer people will live here. The fewer people live here, the fewer services the Council will seek to provide. In the light of the gradual decrease in services, medical, social, and economic in this area, it is not surprising (as para 4:3 of the Proposal reminds us) that between 2001 and 2011 the population of the catchment area declined by 25%.

Response 8

It was noted in the Proposal Paper that the population decline mentioned above took place during a period when the school was open. This information suggests that re-opening the school is unlikely to arrest the area's population decline.

Past analyses of rural locations in Highland that have experienced school closures has established no clear relationship between school closures and population patterns. Additionally, 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.

Issue 9

The Council's Proposal Paper asserts that continuing to mothball the school "would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school." Axiomatically the process of "mothballing" contains an element of uncertainty and therefore a certain "lack of clarity." Apart, therefore, from stating the obvious, this sentence, and the Proposal generally, contains no argument for discontinuing the process of mothballing which has existed with no detriment to the community and no identified cost to the public purse for the last 3 years.

'Mothballing' of the school, as we have seen for the last few years, seems the best way forward. At the present time there are 3 houses in Kinbrace for sale. There must be a good chance therefore that at least one new arrival will have family. The presence of a potential school will encourage a family to come here. The absence of one will mean that the likelihood of any new arrival being of working age is less, and it is worth considering that retired people, constituting the alternative type of new resident, need services more than they provide them. The cost-benefit aspect of this should be part of the over-arching policy in deciding about the future of this school building.

Response 9

The School has already been mothballed for 3 years and there is no evidence to suggest there is a realistic prospect of a significant rise in the school roll. It is unrealistic to expect that a school remain mothballed indefinitely, and nothing to suggest that the local situation will have changed markedly a few years from now. There comes a point where a decision must be made.

Issue 10

What does an employer say to a prospective shepherd and his family who responds to an advertisement for a job in this locality when are asked where their small children will go to school? What reaction can be expected when they are told their 5 year old must leave home at 8.15am and return at 3.45pm winter and summer, and will have to suffer a long car journey to school each day?

The closure of the school would be premature as at the moment there are employment vacancies in the area due to employees retiring. There are also three houses and the two local hotels in the catchment area that are for sale. If the school remained mothballed or reopened it would encourage more families to the local area.

Notwithstanding the regular and persistent withdrawal of services in this area, employment opportunities do occur from time to time as jobs are created or as individuals retire. By way of example, a job opportunity arose locally 3 years ago and was filled by a family who live in the catchment area but whose 6 year old child is compelled to travel to Helmsdale rather than be educated at Kinbrace PS. A year ago a vacancy for a shepherd occurred in the area and one family who had applied for the job lost interest when they learned that the Kinbrace PS was shut. Last week a vacancy arose at the garage in Kinbrace which, hopefully, will attract applications from a mechanic and his family. During the course of the next two or three years there is likely to be at least one job vacancy created by retirement, and possibly others, which will hopefully be filled by at least one applicant with family. It is also a fact that houses in the catchment area regularly come up for rent. None of these considerations have found a place in the Council's Proposal, notwithstanding that many of them were canvassed at the Meeting which took place at the Kinbrace PS with two Council local government officers present on 4 March 2016.

To attract potential employees here is harder if there is no local school. For any potential family person schooling is the first question. It is government policy to encourage population in the glens. Shutting a school goes against that.

Response 10

Responses 8 and 9 address some of the points made above. In addition,

some parents regard the presence of other children in the local area as an important part of their children's social and educational development. In that sense the larger pupil numbers available at Helmsdale could be seen as a positive feature by families considering a move to the area.

Many factors play a part in a family's decision to move to a particular area, including the cost and availability of land and housing, employment opportunities, and the cost of transport to shops and social facilities.

Issue 11

The community also has concerns about the effect of the closure on the role of the Head Teacher at Helmsdale School. Kinbrace was part of the "cluster" and we would have serious concerns about any negative effect the closure would have on our excellent Head Mistress and the future of Helmsdale Primary.

Response 11

Highland Council currently is currently in discussion with staff and parents about a new management model for schools in Highland. The model is based around the principle of a smaller number of Head Teachers who should not be routinely class committed. If implemented the new model would be likely to create larger "clusters" of schools within a local community, managed by a single, non-teaching Head Teacher. This exercise is completely unrelated to the proposal to close Kinbrace Primary, and it potentially affects a large number of schools across Highland.

The new management model is being progressed to provide Head Teachers with greater opportunities to meet the requirement on them to lead school improvement; to respond to new demands on school management; and to respond to challenges faced by Highland Council in filling Head Teacher and other school management posts.

Issue 12

Kinbrace PS was designed and constructed as a school. It has a commodious classroom and nursery accommodation, as well as a spacious playground. Para 8:3 of the Proposal makes clear that the school is currently rated "B" for educational suitability and "C" for building condition, the same ratings enjoyed by Helmsdale PS.

Response 12

The Council agrees with the comments above about the accommodation at Kinbrace Primary, and about the Suitability and Condition ratings at the two schools. As the respondent acknowledges, the information was included in the Proposal Paper.

The Report from Education Scotland (Appendix 4) noted that the nursery at

Helmsdale has recently been refurbished to make it a very attractive learning environment. Greater numbers of children in Helmsdale provide improved opportunities for children in the nursery to learn through play. The parent and toddler room provides an opportunity for parents to meet and support each other and to develop strong family engagement with the school.

Issue 13

There is a perfectly good village hall which the local community repaired and restored three years ago with grant aided funds. There is, therefore, no possibility that "the current school building could be turned over to community use" as envisaged in para 17:2. The closure of the school would necessarily and inevitably create a permanently redundant building which would become an increasing eyesore in the village to all travellers up and down the A897.

There is an adequate building for community use already in the area and specifically designed for it. The school has no purpose as a second community building.

Response 13

The impact of the proposal on the community is considered further at Section 7 below.

Issue 14

Much is made in the Proposal about the advantages of the greater number of pupils at Helmsdale and Melvich PSs. But no consideration at all is given to the long distances which children, some as young as 4 years of age, would be required to travel for example, from Achentoul or Badenloch. These places are, located, respectively, at least 36 and 38 minutes by car direct from Helmsdale PS. With stops to collect other children en route, a very young child living, say, at Achentoul and compelled to drive to Badenloch to collect other pupils, with other stops en route and finally to Helmsdale PS, could expect to spend at least an hour and a half per day travelling to and from school. Such an imposition on a young child is not consistent with the Highland Council's self-imposed "indicator" (para 13.1.5) that "Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school." The fact that the Council recognise that this is not always possible, only serves to underline how undesirable it would be to condemn a child to spend 90 minutes in travel time on a daily basis to and from school from the age of 4 years until 12 years.

Currently three boys of a young age have to travel thirty two miles and for more a day over five days a week, instead of walking to the top of the hill, being transported a short distance. Our son leaves the house at 8.15 and doesn't return until 3.50. This is an eight and a half hour day for a boy of five. In the mornings they all arrive thirty minutes before school starts why? We have around one hour's worth of homework every day and six hours of school. Do you think this is fair for any child at that age?

What about Loch Choire? Are they not allowed families? There is no mention that you leave the tarred road at Badanloch and then travel twelve miles up a dirt track road. It takes around forty-five minutes in a 4x4, when the road is good, to get there. How far do you expect a child to travel? There is also no road to Ben Armine Lodge from Kinbrace.

Alternative schooling involves a very long journey for young children. I have lived 3 miles from Kinbrace for 36 years and can attest that the weather in winter will often make this journey awkward in the extreme. Conversely, there were very few occasions when my children were at the school when classes were not open and everyone managed to get there.

Whilst the community is aware transport has to be provided we are not clear what form this will take. There would be real concerns about children [potentially as young as 5 years old] going unaccompanied on the train and who would collect them at Helmsdale station? If they are being brought in by car/bus will this be from their own home or will there be a collection point in Kinbrace? The journey however supplied will make it a very long day for these young children.

Response 14

The Proposal Paper acknowledged that the length of the home to school journey was the main adverse effect arising from the Proposal. Whilst this was a particular concern to one current parent, the Education Scotland Report (Appendix 4) noted that the majority of Kinbrace parents did not consider travel time to be the most significant factor in determining where their children should be educated. The Council also notes that the parent from Badanloch, whose child has the longest journey to school, took the view that the educational interests of her children outweighed the travel time consideration.

The time period mentioned, 8.15am to 3.50pm, represents 7.5 hours rather than 8.5 hours. It is nevertheless acknowledged that the journey times are long. Since the consultation exercise was carried out, (during the 2015-16 school session), the afternoon departure time for the infant children from Kinbrace has been changed to 2.45pm (previously 3.15pm). This means infant children from Kinbrace itself should now be returning home at 3.15-3.20pm.

The morning start time at Helmsdale Primary is 9.15am, and the school advise that the Kinbrace children arrive at school at approximately 8.55am. Highland Council is currently in the process of re-tendering this contract (along with others) and the new contract will specify that the Kinbrace pupils should not be delivered to Helmsdale Primary any earlier than 5 minutes before the bell.

There are no children currently at Loch Choire, and any family with young children who might move there in future would need to take the potential

school journey time into account. Ben Armine Lodge is within the Rogart Primary School catchment so is not affected by this proposal.

The Proposal Paper included the information that during the current school session the school transport from the Strath to Helmsdale has operated without interruption.

Highland Council has absolutely no plans to use the train as a method of transporting children from Kinbrace to Helmsdale. We would agree with the concerns raised about supervision and collection of children using the train, and in any case the timetable is not suitable.

Issue 15

The Council's Proposal is on shaky ground on the question of costs. These are discussed in paras 15:1 - 4. The Council's figures assert that the current cost of transporting the Kinbrace catchment area pupils to Helmsdale PS is £14,769. Yet the Proposal goes on to claim that in the event that Kinbrace PS was to reopen at some time in the future, the cost of transporting pupils from various parts of the Kinbrace catchment area would be of the order of £25,000. This calculation depends on the assumption that no "local contractor" would be available to transport pupils within the Kinbrace catchment area to Kinbrace PS. Why should such an assumption be made, unless it be to try to justify the permanent closure of the Kinbrace PS? Are the Council officers who wrote this Proposal so ignorant of this locality and the way in which the Kinbrace PS has been run in the past that they are unaware of the fact that between the early 1930s and 2012, a period of at least 80 years, local children were chauffeured to Kinbrace PS by several generations of the same "contractor" family who lived in Kinbrace?

Response 15

The Highland Council awards school transport contracts on the basis of competitive tender, and this makes it extremely difficult to estimate future costs for routes that do not exist at present. Historical records suggest that in 2011 there was a contract for Kinbrace Primary School at a daily rate of £45.14 (£8576.60/year). That transport would of course have been over a different mileage from any required today, were Kinbrace Primary to re-open. No contractor in the Kinbrace area has expressed any interest in providing the current transport from Badanloch and Kinbrace to Helmsdale, so the Council has no grounds for saying that a similar price would be obtainable today. However, it is possible that a tender from a local contractor might be received. For illustrative purposes, the financial analysis has been amended to show an anticipated annual transport cost of £10,000 were Kinbrace Primary to re-open. If this assumption is made, the cost per pupil of re-opening Kinbrace falls to approximately £28,000.

This point is also covered below in Section 8.

Issue 16

If the school were to reopen it would offer two or three local jobs, not including teachers.

The need for transport also creates employment and sustains the area, a good objective.

Response 16

It was acknowledged in the Proposal paper that if Kinbrace School were reopened the Council would need to consider employing part-time staff such as a cleaner, school clerical, and early years practitioner. In recent years Highland Council has significantly reduced its staffing complement in response to a reduced overall budget. In that context, it would be very difficult for the Council to justify the recruitment of 3 or 4 new posts, to staff a school with the same number of pupils.

Issue 17

The only reason there have been no children at Kinbrace School since 2013 is because the school has been mothballed. Parents were told their children had to attend Helmsdale and were given no choice in the matter.

Response 17

This is of course correct. However during the period of mothballing the majority of parents and children have adjusted to attending Helmsdale Primary and would prefer to continue to do so.

Issue 18

As time has gone on the catchment of Kinbrace PS has diminished, as the school roles in Helmsdale and Melvich decreased, their catchment areas have widened, taking children from Kinbrace PS. If the Council was to extend Kinbrace PS catchment back an extra three miles max, it would increase the role from five to eight children for 2019-20, as the roll stands at the moment

Response 18

This claim is not correct. The catchment area for Kinbrace Primary has not been altered.

Expanding the catchment area of Kinbrace Primary was considered as one of the alternatives to closure prior to the publication of the proposal paper, and details of the Council's consideration were set out at Section 5 of the Proposal Paper. It is clear that expanding the Kinbrace catchment at the expense of neighbouring rural schools would risk undermining the sustainability of those schools, as well as increasing travel distances for pupils without increasing

the roll at Kinbrace to a viable number.

Issue 19

Please tell us where in the curriculum for excellence does it stipulate education can't be delivered if there are only five or less pupils?

I have had 4 children schooled at Kinbrace. During the year when my daughter graduated from University two former pupils managed to get first class degrees. Its educational satisfactoriness as historic record is not in doubt.

Response 19

Highland Council has never claimed that education could not be delivered in a re-opened Kinbrace Primary School. We do however argue that the greater pupil numbers available at Helmsdale Primary offer educational and social benefits not available to schools with a roll of 3-5 pupils, as would be the roll at a re-opened Kinbrace Primary. S.13 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council's views in detail.

Issue 20

This is about the money, not the children.

Response 20

Highland Council is clear that the closure of Kinbrace Primary is in the best interests of the children in both Kinbrace and Helmsdale. This view was set out in detail in the Proposal Paper and is supported by Education Scotland (Appendix 4).

Issue 21

Kinbrace PS had a visiting music teacher, P.E teacher and art teacher that all came from Farr High School to visit for six weeks rotation. They had swimming lessons in Bettyhill. The kids loved it. They did tele-conferencing with children all over the world. The world of IT has not gone backwards, it's moved forward, and we believe Kinbrace PS could have moved forward too if it had been allowed to do so.

Response 21

There are nevertheless limits to what can be achieved using Information Technology, for example in participating in peer review exercises, in the sharing of tasks, in sports, music and art activities, and of course in terms of social interaction.

Issue 22

Kinbrace PS was the hub of the community, where the kids learnt community spirit, and warmly invited everyone to join in for any occasion, whether they were old or young.

Response 22

The new merged school will maintain strong links with all the communities within the new catchment. Any community events historically held within the Kinbrace catchment could be replicated within Helmsdale Primary.

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. If the proposal is implemented, children who live in the catchment area which served Kinbrace would learn as part of a larger teaching group. This larger number and wider range of peers is likely to allow increased opportunities for socialising and making friends. The larger peer group would allow children to engage more appropriately in peer and self-assessment activities. This could also provide greater opportunities to be involved in team sports and group activities which have the potential to contribute positively to children's social and emotional development.
- 6.3 HM Inspectors further noted that the majority of parents saw benefits in their children having good access to visiting art, music and sports specialists, and that this access may be reduced if Kinbrace were to reopen. Almost all parents and staff saw benefits in making the transition from Helmsdale primary to secondary education as part of a larger group. The majority of parents in the Kinbrace catchment were, on balance, in favour of the proposal. Whilst they acknowledged the potential reduction in occasional local events with Kinbrace residents, they recognised the benefits afforded by the children attending a larger school with a greater number of children. Although the majority of Kinbrace parents would prefer less travelling time for their children, they do not consider it the most significant factor in determining where they wish their children to be educated.
- 6.4 HM Inspectors commented that the Council has given good consideration to any reasonable alternatives. Through mothballing, the Council had provided time for full consideration and sought to allow time for any increase in the local population. A few local employers feel that continuing to mothball the school will help to attract potential residents and employees. There is a lack of evidence to support this view, however, as there has been no upward trend.

- 6.5 Two issues were identified for further consideration by the Council. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it. If the council decides to proceed with its plans to close Kinbrace Primary School, it should work with the local community in exploring possible future uses for the school building.
- 6.6 The future use of the building is addressed in Section 7 below, whilst inaccuracies and omissions are addressed in Section 8.

7.0 Effects on the Community

- 7.1 Paragraphs 17.1 to 17.3 of the Proposal Paper set out the Council's assessment of the effects of closure on the local community. This assessment was challenged by the comments summarised at Issue 13 above.
- 7.2 In the event of the school being closed, the Highland Council would still be keen to work with the local community to see whether the current school building could be turned over to community use. Nevertheless, the Council accepts that the presence of the village hall makes any community use of the school building unlikely. There is a limit to the amount of public space that can be supported by a community the size of Kinbrace.
- 7.3 There would however be no intention to leave Kinbrace Primary School as "*a permanently redundant building which would become an increasing eyesore in the village...*" Should no Council or community use be identified for the building, our intention would be to dispose of it on the open market.
- 7.4 The report from Education Scotland makes reference to the loss of the occasional local event since the mothballing of Kinbrace School, but notes that the majority of parents see this as being outweighed by the educational benefits derived from children attending Helmsdale School.

8.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

- 8.1 Education Scotland identified the following inaccuracies in the Proposal Paper.
- Paragraph 8.2 contained the sentence "*Based on the permanent capacity available, the notional 2019-20 roll of 5 pupils would represent 25% use of capacity.*" The percentage figure should of course have been 20%.
 - At paragraph 9.3, the word "roll" was mistyped as "toll."
- 8.2 The Council has carefully considered the impact of these inaccuracies on the Proposal but has concluded that neither represents a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal. The correct figure for the percentage use of capacity is actually lower than that given in the Proposal paper.
- 8.3 One of the responses to consultation highlighted an inaccuracy in respect of Appendix M to the Proposal Paper, (the Financial Analysis). The error arises at Col B Line 4, where the spreadsheet is headed "Achfary Primary School."

- 8.4 Having investigated this matter, Highland Council can confirm that the actual figures within the spreadsheet relate to Kinbrace Primary. The template itself was copied over from prior work on Achfary Primary and we failed to amend the reference in respect of the name of the school. Highland Council has responded to the consultee and unreservedly apologised for this error. A revised Financial Analysis document can be found at **Appendix 5**.
- 8.5 The Council has carefully considered the impact of this inaccuracy on the Proposal but has concluded it does not represent a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal. The actual figures in the spreadsheet do relate to Kinbrace Primary and it is only the text that mistakenly refers to Achfary Primary. Correcting the text would not therefore alter the figures in the spreadsheet.
- 8.6 Issue 15, and the associated Response 15, above, address an alleged inaccuracy in the financial analysis, in relation to the possible costs of transport were Kinbrace PS to re-open. Response 15 sets out why it is effectively impossible to provide accurate estimates for the future costs of transport routes that do not exist at present. However, for illustrative purposes we have amended the financial analysis to show a reduced transport cost in the event of Kinbrace Primary re-opening.
- 8.7 Once again, the Council has concluded that the impact of this alleged inaccuracy does not represent a material consideration relevant to the Authority's decision as to implementation of the proposal. In coming to this conclusion the Authority has considered the following factors:
- the nature of the tendering process for school transport means that neither figure is anything other than an estimate;
 - Under the revised analysis the annual operational costs of Kinbrace Primary would be just under £113,000, with the cost per pupil at just over £28000. The latter cost is higher than the equivalent cost in most schools.

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. The consultation exercise did not identify any new alternatives for consideration.

The majority of written responses to the consultation exercise from those opposed to closure acknowledged that the current number of children in

Kinbrace is insufficient to justify re-opening the school at this stage, and sought instead to prolong the “mothballing” of the school that has been in place since 2013. Whilst this would be possible, neither the Highland Council nor Education Scotland have been able to identify any evidence (other than anecdotal evidence) that suggests there is likely to be an upward trend in the local population. Indeed, the evidence of past census figures suggest the opposite.

Having reconsidered each of the alternatives identified at Section 3 of the Proposal Paper, 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 13 of the Proposal Paper and in the Education Scotland Report at **Appendix 4**.

The Report by Education Scotland highlighted that the majority of parents in the Kinbrace catchment were, on balance, in favour of the proposal.

- 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 17 of the Proposal and is further considered at Section 7 above. In responding to the consultation exercise, two local employers expressed concerns that closure of the school would have a negative effect on the perceived attractiveness of the area for families, and would therefore accelerate population decline within the Kinbrace catchment. However, evidence both from across Highland and across Scotland does not suggest any clear relationship between school closures and population rise and fall. There was a clear population decline in Kinbrace between the census years of 2001 and 2011, during a period when the school was open. As is noted by Education Scotland, there is no compelling evidence that re-opening Kinbrace School would have a significant impact on local employment or in boosting the potential school roll.

The responses to consultation indicated that the loss of the school building is unlikely to have a significant community impact, due to the presence of the village hall. If so, proposals for future use of the school building would be subject to the Council's asset management policy.

- 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 time was considered at Sections 14, 15 and 21 of the original proposal paper and again at Responses 2 and 14 above. Since Kinbrace Primary School has been mothballed since 2013, implementation of the proposal would not require the introduction of any different travelling arrangements for pupils or staff. It would however be reasonable in these circumstances to compare the travel arrangements under the Proposal with those that would apply were Kinbrace Primary to re-open.

Of the 3 current families living in the Kinbrace catchment, one lives between Kinbrace and Helmsdale and their children would not have a substantially longer journey with either option. A second family lives west of Kinbrace and has a significantly longer journey to Helmsdale, but this family has made it clear that they regard the educational advantages offered by Helmsdale Primary as outweighing the disadvantages of longer travel. The third family in the area live in Kinbrace itself. Re-opening Kinbrace School would significantly reduce the travel time for the child involved.

For two of the three families affected, the overall travel times for pupils are within the guideline figure adopted by Highland Council for the purposes of reviewing the school estate. As already mentioned, the family with the longest travel time have indicated their opposition to the re-opening of Kinbrace Primary (see Response 1).

If the closure Proposal is implemented, Highland Council will keep the travel arrangements for Kinbrace pupils under annual review to ensure children from the Kinbrace catchment do not have their trips made longer by unreasonable detours to nearer places on their way to school or by unnecessarily early or late arrival/collection times.

10.0 Procedure for Call-in by the Scottish Ministers

- 10.1 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 9 March 2017 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 up until midnight on 29 March 2017. The Scottish Ministers will have until midnight on 3 May 2017 to take a decision on the call-in of the Closure Proposal.
- 10.2 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 midnight on 29 March 2017.**
- 10.3 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.

11.0 Legal issues

- 11.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
- 11.2 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.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1 Advice on the financial implications of the proposal was issued as an Appendix to the Proposal Paper. Uncertainties concerning the cost of school transport are reflected in a revised Financial Analysis which is at **Appendix 5**.

13.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was issued with the proposal paper and can be found at **Appendix N** to the Proposal Paper.

14.0 Conclusion

- 14.1 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, 6, 7, 8 and 9 above. For the reasons set out in detail in sections 5-9,
- 14.2 Education Scotland staff visited Helmsdale Primary School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 14.3 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 offers educational benefits and that implementation of the Proposal in full is the most

appropriate response to the reason for formulating the Proposal. The reasons for this conclusion are set out at Section 5-9 above.

15 Recommendation

- 15.1 It is therefore recommended that Highland Council approves the proposal to discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools.

Bill Alexander
Director of Care and Learning
19 December 2016

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE

The proposal is to discontinue the provision of education at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale Primary School and Melvich 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 Kinbrace Primary School. For the avoidance of doubt, it should be assumed that the related Pre-School provision is included within any reference below to a Primary School. In particular, any reference to Kinbrace Primary School should be taken as a reference to both the primary and nursery classes.
- To divide the catchment area between the catchment areas of Helmsdale Primary School and Melvich Primary School. (Maps of the current catchment areas are at **Appendices A, Ai, and 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 Kinbrace 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 Kinbrace 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 17 below) and to the impact of differing travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Kinbrace catchment (Sections 12 and 19 below). The 4 current pupils within the catchment currently attend Helmsdale Primary.

Reason for the Proposal

2.1 This proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:

- No children have attended Kinbrace Primary School since the school was mothballed at the end of session 2012-13;
- Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of 5 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 5 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 Kinbrace 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 Kinbrace Primary to be re-opened, it would most likely be under an arrangement where the school was managed as part of a “cluster” with other schools within the ASG. However, alternative management arrangements would not address the wider population issues within the Kinbrace area.

3.5 There has been no significant rise to the school age population of Kinbrace since the school was mothballed in 2013.

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 with Helmsdale Community Council and with parents and residents within the Kinbrace catchment.

3.7 In the event of a school closure being approved, consideration is required on the most appropriate way to re-zone the Kinbrace catchment. Further discussion on this can be found at Section 14 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 Kinbrace Primary School with Current Catchment Area

- 4.1 For the 2016-17 school session, there will be four pupils of P1-7 age living within the catchment area of the school, with 1 pupil of nursery age (N3) in August 2016. At present there are no children of pre-nursery age within the catchment (all figures as at May 2016).
- 4.2 The above figures suggest that, were Kinbrace 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 - 4
2017-18 - 4
2018-19 - 5
2019-20 - 5
- 4.3 The population living in the catchment fell by 26% between 2001 and 2011 and the population of the primary catchment differs from the Highland average with only 9% aged 16 to 29 and 22% 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 0.4 births per year: the recent historic average has been higher than this.
- 4.4 If Kinbrace Primary were re-opened, it would almost certainly be as a single teacher school with a total roll in single figures. 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 13.
- 4.5 As previously stated, the school has not been operational since July 2013. No placing requests in or out of Kinbrace 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 14 and 15 below.

Re-Opening of Kinbrace Primary School with Expanded Catchment Area

- 5.1 The catchment area for Kinbrace PS abuts those of six other schools although the local road links connect directly to only 3 of these – Helmsdale, Melvich, and Altnaharra. All three are themselves rural schools. Helmsdale Primary is expected to have a P1-7 roll of 49 in August 2016, and to experience a declining roll thereafter. The roll at Melvich Primary is projected to be 20 in August 2016, and to see a gentle rise in the longer term. Any expansion of the Kinbrace catchment at the expense of the catchments of these 2 rural schools risks undermining the sustainability of these schools, as well as increasing travel distances for pupils without increasing the roll at Kinbrace to a viable number.
- 5.2 The roll at Altnaharra Primary is due to fall to 3 in August 2016 and to remain at 2-3 for the foreseeable future. At the present time (May 2016) there are

discussions underway with parents about whether the school should be mothballed for session 2016-17.

- 5.3 A map of the Altnaharra Primary School catchment is at **Appendix C**. Roll projections for Altnaharra, Helmsdale and Melvich Primaries are at **Appendix D - Dii**.

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 available for use by the community.

General Background

- 7.1 The proposals are advanced within the wider context of demographic change in the area. Between 2001 and 2011 (Census figures) the population of Highland grew by 11% and the population of the Golspie High ASG area grew by 4%. During this period the secondary school roll fell steadily from 393 in 2001 to 260 in 2014. The population of the Golspie ASG area is slightly older than the Highland average with 12% aged 16 to 29 and 14% aged 30 to 44 (Highland 15% and 19% respectively).

The ageing population in Sutherland results in low birth numbers but the birth rate (the true birth rate measured as births per year per 1,000 women aged X years) tends to be above the Highland average in the Golspie High area.

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 – Kinbrace Primary School

- 8.1 Kinbrace Primary is situated in north-east Sutherland. The catchment area stretches from Forsinard in the north, to Garvault in the west, east to Kildonan Lodge and south west to just before Armine Lodge.

The school has been mothballed since the end of session 2012-13, when the school roll fell to 1, and the sole pupil transferred to Helmsdale Primary School.

The accommodation at Kinbrace consists of a single P1-7 classroom and a nursery room with ancillary accommodation. There is a spacious playground.

- 8.2 The school has a permanent capacity of 25. Based on the permanent capacity available, the notional 2019-20 roll of 5 pupils would represent 25% use of capacity.
- 8.3 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). Kinbrace Primary School is currently rated as "B" for educational suitability of the building and "C" for building condition.
- 8.4 The number of pupils within the catchment area entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.
- 8.5 There has been no HMIE report published since before 2006.
- 8.6 When the school was last in operation, it was managed as part of a "cluster" arrangement with Helmsdale School. Were the school to re-open with the roll figures indicated, the staffing entitlements, as per the Council's Devolved School Management policy are as follows;

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

In addition ASN teaching and non-teaching staff would be allocated to the school in accordance with an annual assessment of need.

A Cleaning Operative – HC2 - would also be employed at 6.25 hours per week.

No meals were supplied at or to Kinbrace School, prior to it being mothballed.

- 8.7 Annual CO₂ emissions from the Kinbrace Primary School building for the year 2013-14 are estimated at 11 tonnes. During 2012-13, the last year the school was operational, equivalent emissions are estimated at 28 tonnes. Closure of the school and disposal of the building could potentially eliminate these emissions, although this depends on the future use of the building.

- 8.8 Three of the four pupils within the Kinbrace Primary School catchment would receive transport to school, in the event that Kinbrace School re-opened. This would be on a mixture of distance and safety criteria.

Current Details – Helmsdale Primary

- 9.1 Helmsdale Primary School is set in the coastal village of the same name, in East Sutherland. The School consists of 3 classrooms, 1 nursery room, a room used for toddlers, 1 library/ music room, one gym hall, one small meeting room, one medical room, and a staffroom. There is an extensive playground.
- 9.2 For the 2016-17 school session, the school is expected to have 49 pupils in three classes, a P1-2 with 14 pupils, a P3-4 with 15 pupils, and a P5-7 with 20 pupils. There are expected to be 12 children in the nursery.
- 9.3 The projected roll suggests the school will experience a falling roll after 2018-19, reaching a low of 34. Longer term projections suggest a toll of between 30 and 40.

2016-17 - 49

2017-18 - 44

2018-19 - 48

2019-20 - 44

2020-21 - 38

2021-22 - 38

2022-23 - 34

2023-24 - 34

2024-25 - 36

2025-26 - 34

2026-27 - 35

2027-28 - 35

2028-29 - 36

2029-30 - 37

- 9.4 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2010-11 to 2014-15) there has been one placing request to join Helmsdale Primary, and 3 placing requests to leave.
- 9.5 The population living in the catchment fell by 1% between 2001 and 2011 and the population of the primary catchment is older than the Highland average with 11% aged 16 to 29 and 12% 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 4 births per year: the recent historic average has been slightly higher than this.
- 9.6 The school has a permanent capacity of 100. The projected August 2016 roll of 49 pupils would therefore represent 49% use of capacity.
- 9.7 Helmsdale Primary is currently assessed as “B” for building Suitability and “C” for building Condition.

9.8 The number entitled to free school meals is not broken down to avoid the identification of pupils.

9.9 The anticipated year group numbers for August 2016, based on current enrolments, are as follows:

P1 – 4

P2 – 10

P3 – 5

P4 – 10

P5 – 9

P6 – 3

P7 – 8

9.10 The most recent HMIE report was published in September 2008. A Copy is at **Appendix F**. Follow-up reports are at **Appendices Fi and Fii**.

9.11 The 2016-17 staffing arrangements are as follows:

Head Teacher – 1.00FTE

Unpromoted Teachers – 2.00 FTE

Class Contact Time Teachers – 0.30 FTE

Clerical Assistant/General Auxiliary – 18 hours per week

Playground Supervisor – 6.25 hours per week

Road Crossing Patroller – 11.25 hours per week

In addition, ASN teaching and non-teaching staff are allocated to the school on an annual basis, according to assessed need. The school nursery is staffed with two Early Years Practitioners, who are each employed for 23 hours per week.

The Catering and Cleaning Service employs the following staff at the school;

Cook HC3 27.5 hours per week.

Cleaning Supervisor HC4 – 18.25 hours per week

Cleaning Operative HC1 – 16.00 hours per week.

9.12 Annual CO₂ emissions from the Helmsdale Primary School building are estimated at 90 tonnes. Implementing the closure proposal would not alter this figure.

9.13 There is presently a single school transport route to Helmsdale Primary, carrying 8 pupils, from a 2015-16 roll of 52. Currently therefore, approximately 15% of the pupil population are in receipt of school transport.

9.14 The closure of Kinbrace Primary would not be expected to cause any adverse effects to Helmsdale Primary. Rather it could be argued that closing Kinbrace Primary would to a certain extent help maintain the current school roll at Helmsdale.

Current Details – Melvich Primary

- 10.1 Melvich Primary School is situated in the centre of Melvich Village. The School consists of 2 classrooms, 1 nursery room, a large hall, and a community room.
- 10.2 For the 2016-17 school session, the school is expected to have 20 pupils in two classes, a P1-4 with 9 pupils, and a P5-7 with 11 pupils. There are expected to be 8 children in the nursery.
- 10.3 Projections suggest that the school roll will remain fairly steady over the next few years, with a gentle rise in the longer-term.

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

- 10.4 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2010-10 to 2014-15) there have been zero placing requests to join Melvich Primary, and 2 placing requests to leave.
- 10.5 The population living in the catchment fell by 11% between 2001 and 2011 (from 525 to 468) 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 3 births per year: the recent historic average has been below this.
- 10.6 The school has a permanent capacity of 50. The projected August 2016 roll of 20 pupils would therefore represent 40% use of capacity.
- 10.7 Melvich Primary is currently assessed as “B” for building Suitability and “C” for building Condition.
- 10.8 There are no P4-7 pupils entitled to free school meals.
- 10.9 The anticipated year group numbers for August 2016, based on current enrolments, are as follows:

P1 – 3
P2 – 3
P3 – 0

P4 – 3

P5 – 4

P6 – 3

P7 – 4

The class structure for 2016-17 is yet to be finalised.

10.10 The most recent HMIE report was published in December 2006. A copy is at **Appendix G**, with follow-up reports at **Appendices Gi and Gii**.

10.11 The 2016-17 staffing arrangements are as follows:

Head Teacher - 1.00FTE

Unpromoted Teachers – 1.00 FTE

Class Contact Time Teachers – 0.20 FTE

Clerical Assistant – 17 hours per week

Janitor/Driver/Cleaner – 37 hours per week

In addition, ASN teaching and non-teaching staff are currently allocated annually to the school, according to assessed levels of need. The school nursery is staffed with two Early Years Practitioners, who are each employed for 23 hours per week.

The Catering and Cleaning Service employs the following staff at the school;

Cook (HC3) 27.5 hours per week.

10.12 Annual CO₂ emissions from the Melvich Primary School building are estimated at 45 tonnes. Implementing the proposal would not alter this figure.

10.13 There is presently a single school transport route to Melvich Primary, carrying 7 pupils. The school has 24 pupils for the current session. Currently therefore, approximately 29% of the pupil population are in receipt of school transport.

10.14 The closure of Kinbrace Primary would not be expected to cause any adverse effects to Melvich Primary. The proposed transfer of Forsinard to the Melvich catchment would not provide any additional pupils at present, but offers at least the prospect of helping to maintain pupil numbers at Melvich, itself a small rural school.

Current Details – Altnaharra Primary

11.1 Altnaharra Primary School is a very small school situated within the isolated community of the same name. The School consists of 1 classroom and 1 room used as a nursery when there are nursery age children. At the present time the nursery room is used for art, music and PE as well as for lunches.

11.2 For the 2016-17 school session, the school is projected to have 3 pupils in a single P1-7 class. There are currently no nursery children. As mentioned at paragraph 5.2 above, there are ongoing discussions with parents about “mothballing” the school for session 2016-17.

11.3 Projections suggest the long-term roll will be in the region of 2-3 pupils.

2016-17 - 3
2017-18 - 3
2018-19 - 3
2019-20 - 3
2020-21 - 3
2021-22 - 2
2022-23 - 2
2023-24 - 3
2024-25 - 3
2025-26 - 2
2026-27 - 2
2027-28 - 2
2028-29 - 2
2029-30 - 2

- 11.4 No placing requests in or out of Altnaharra Primary School have been recorded in the last 5 complete school sessions (from 2009-10 to 2013-14).
- 11.5 The population living in the catchment fell by 12% between 2001 and 2011 (from 42 to 37) and the population of the primary catchment is slightly older than the Highland average with 15% 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 above this.
- 11.6 The school has a permanent capacity of 25. The August 2016 roll of 3 pupils would therefore represent 12% use of capacity.
- 11.7 Altnaharra Primary is currently assessed as “B” for building Suitability and “C” for building Condition.
- 11.8 There are no P4-7 pupils entitled to free school meals.
- 11.9 The anticipated year group numbers for August 2016, based on current enrolments, are as follows:

P1 – 1
P2 – 0
P3 – 1
P4 – 0
P5 – 1
P6 – 0
P7 – 0

- 11.10 The most recent HMIE report was published in March 2008. A copy is at **Appendix H.**

- 11.11 The 2015-16 staffing arrangements are as follows:

Head Teacher – 1.00FTE
Unpromoted Teachers – 1.00 FTE

Class Contact Time Teachers – 0.20 FTE
Clerical Assistant/General Auxiliary – 17 hours per week

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

One cleaning operative is employed at the school at 7.50 hours per week. There is no catering provision at Altnaharra Primary.

11.12 Annual CO₂ emissions from the Altnaharra Primary School building are estimated at 13 tonnes. Implementing this proposal would not alter this figure.

11.13 As of August 2016, no pupils at the school will be in receipt of school transport.

11.14 No adverse effects on Altnaharra Primary are expected to arise from the proposal.

Farr and Golspie High Schools

12.1 The proposed transfer of the community of Forsinard to the Melvich PS catchment would also mean that community transfers from the Golspie High School to the Farr High catchment.

12.2 Farr High School is a small secondary school (67 pupils for session 2015-16) located in Bettyhill on the north coast of Sutherland. The school roll is projected to be 72 in 2016-17 but to fall somewhat in the longer term:

2016-17 - 72
2017-18 - 66
2018-19 - 70
2019-20 - 72
2020-21 - 64
2021-22 - 55
2022-23 - 55
2023-24 - 54
2024-25 - 55
2025-26 - 57
2026-27 - 61
2027-28 - 63
2028-29 - 61
2029-30 - 61

12.3 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2009-10 to 2013-14) there have been 16 placing requests to join Farr High School, and 7 placing requests to leave.

12.4 Between 2001 and 2011 (Census figures) the population of Highland grew by 11% and the population of the Farr High ASG area grew by 2%. During this period the school roll rose from 79 (2001) to 95 (2009), but has since fallen to the current 67. The population of the Farr High ASG area is older than the Highland average with 12% aged 16 to 29 and 15% 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) across Sutherland as a whole is the lowest in Highland, and in recent years the birth rate in the Farr ASG area has been slightly higher than we might expect.

- 12.5 Farr High is rated “C” for building Condition and “C” for building Suitability. Annual CO₂ emissions from the Farr High School building are estimated at 212 tonnes. Implementing this proposal would not alter this figure.
- 12.6 The latest inspection report was published in November 2009 and a copy is at **Appendix I**.
- 12.7 The distance and travel time between Forsinard and Farr High School is 28.3 miles/50 minutes.
- 12.8 Golspie High School has a 2015-16 roll of 260. The school roll is projected to be 235 in session 2016-17 and to continue to fall in the longer term:
- 2016-17 - 235
 - 2017-18 - 230
 - 2018-19 - 221
 - 2019-20 - 221
 - 2020-21 - 217
 - 2021-22 - 231
 - 2022-23 - 236
 - 2023-24 - 239
 - 2024-25 - 239
 - 2025-26 - 229
 - 2026-27 - 218
 - 2027-28 - 204
 - 2028-29 - 195
 - 2029-30 - 190
- 12.9 Golspie High is rated “B” for building Suitability and “C” for building Condition. Annual CO₂ emissions from the Golspie High School building are estimated at 377 tonnes. Implementing this proposal would not alter this figure.
- 12.10 The latest inspection report was published in June 2008. A copy is at **Appendix J**. Follow-up reports published in 2009, 2010, and 2011 are **Appendices Ji- Jiii**.
- 12.11 During the last 5 completed school sessions (2009-10 to 2014-15) there have been 2 placing request to join Golspie High School, and 54 placing requests to leave.
- 12.12 The distance and travel time between Forsinard and Golspie High School is 34.4 miles/65 minutes.

Educational Benefits

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 It is Highland Council's view that the pupils from the Kinbrace catchment derive educational benefits from their current attendance at Helmsdale Primary School, and that this would also apply to any pupils who attended Melvich Primary. Formalising the current arrangements would provide a number of such benefits, judged against both the Highland and National criteria set out above, and in particular those at points, 2, 3, 4 and 9.
- 13.4 Pupils at both Helmsdale and Melvich 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 4/5, of varying ages, such as that if Kinbrace 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 4/5 would also 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.
- 13.5 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.

- 13.6 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.
- 13.7 It is self-evident that a total school roll of 4 or 5 pupils at varying ages 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.
- 13.8 As with sports, the larger rolls at Helmsdale and Melvich Primaries provide a greater likelihood of pupils benefitting from a wider range of solo and group musical and artistic opportunities. Helmsdale Primary school receives a visiting Art specialist for the P5-7 class, a Strings tutor, and Chanter tutor for P4-7 and a Kodály Voice tutor for P3 & 4. Melvich Primary also receives a visiting art specialist and a Strings tutor. Tutors from the local Fèis visit at weekends during certain times of the year, offering tuition in traditional instruments.
- 13.9 Larger pupil numbers also provide more opportunities for after school activities. Helmsdale Primary currently runs an after school football club for P3-7 twice a week. Parents hope to start another after school club offering a variety of activities depending on the interests of the children e.g. sports, crafts, homework club, construction, music. Melvich Primary has an after-school club for Scripture Union. Football and rugby are also offered using the grounds of Farr High School, with transport to Bettyhill provided by High Life Highland.
- 13.10 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.
- 13.11 School shows, plays and public performances are events that that are much more difficult to deliver with restricted numbers. Helmsdale Primary produces two whole school shows per year, a nativity at Christmas and a show in the summer term, each with two performances. Melvich Primary produces a Christmas Show and has an annual Burns Supper. The school recently participated in the "Rock Challenge" dance/drama event at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness.

13.12 In summary, a number of positive benefits have derived from the operational merger of Kinbrace and Helmsdale Primary Schools, and Melvich Primary would offer similar advantages to any pupils attending that school.

Catchment Areas

- 14.1 All of the pupils within the Kinbrace Primary catchment currently attend Helmsdale Primary. Based on the size, geography, spread of communities, and distance from neighbouring schools, the Council's proposal is to re-align the catchment of Kinbrace split between the Melvich and Helmsdale catchments. In doing so, giving consideration to relative travel distances and times of the various communities within the current Kinbrace catchment.
- 14.2 The distance and travel time from Kinbrace Primary to Helmsdale Primary is 17.1 miles/28 minutes. The distance from Kinbrace Primary to Melvich Primary is 23.2 miles and 38 minutes. In the event that Kinbrace Primary closes, the community of Kinbrace itself should be re-zoned to the Helmsdale catchment.
- 14.3 The community of Forsinard, at the north end of the Kinbrace catchment, is however closer to Melvich (16 miles/28 minutes as compared with 24.8 miles/47 minutes to Helmsdale). It seems clear therefore, that if Kinbrace Primary closes, Forsinard should be re-zoned to the Melvich Primary School catchment. This would mean that secondary school pupils from Forsinard would attend Farr High School.
- 14.3 In order to implement the above, the southern boundary of the redrawn Melvich PS catchment would mirror the southern boundary of the Melvich Community Council area.
- 14.4 An alternative proposal would be to draw the southern boundary of the Melvich catchment along the railway line, to the point where it meets the community council boundary.
- 14.4 Badanloch, towards the west of the Kinbrace catchment, is roughly equidistant between Helmsdale (21.7 miles, 38 minutes) and Altnaharra (23.2 miles, 39 minutes), whilst Garvault, at the far west of the catchment, is around 8 minutes closer to Altnaharra.
- 14.5 The school roll at Altnaharra Primary is lower than that of Helmsdale Primary and for that reason the school may be mothballed during session 2016-17. Taking all relevant factors into account, Highland Council does not consider that any part of the Kinbrace catchment should be transferred into the Altnaharra catchment.
- 14.6 On balance therefore, the Highland Council would favour including Badanloch and Garvault in the Helmsdale catchment.
- 14.7 A map of the proposed new catchments is at **Appendix K**.
- 14.8 The proposed split of the catchment would have no effect on current pupils within the catchment.

Effects on School Transport

- 15.1 Currently, a single transport route operates to Helmsdale Primary, taking a total of 8 pupils, including 2 from the current Kinbrace catchment. The route is combined with transport from Loth to Helmsdale. Based on current prices and 190 days in the school year, the annual cost is £26,169.
- 15.2 Were Kinbrace School to re-open, the annual cost of the reduced transport to Helmsdale Primary is estimated at £11,400, a saving of £14,769.
- 15.3 As mentioned at paragraph 8.8 above, transport would need to be arranged for Kinbrace Primary, were it to re-open. It is very difficult to estimate what the costs would be, but on the basis that pupils would be travelling to Kinbrace from both east and west of the school, combined with the lack of a local contractor, the annual costs may be very similar to the current transport costs for the Badanloch to Helmsdale route, around £25000 per year.
- 15.4 Unusually therefore, our best estimate is that the re-opening of Kinbrace Primary would lead to increased overall transport costs, with the saving on the Helmsdale route being more than offset by the cost of providing transport to Kinbrace Primary. The particular local factors influencing this are that the current single route to Helmsdale would be replaced by separate routes to Helmsdale and Kinbrace, requiring an additional vehicle and additional driver, and that the lack of a contractor based in Kinbrace means that the contractor's overall mileage would not decrease.
- 15.5 The table at **Appendix L** illustrates the additional emissions of greenhouse gases arising from the current transport arrangements from Kinbrace Primary to Helmsdale Primary. The figures are based on the type of vehicle used and the fuel used by that vehicle.
- 15.6 The table shows that the transport from Kinbrace to Helmsdale Primary generates about three quarters of a tonne per annum of CO₂ equivalent emissions. The figures can however only be estimates as emissions are affected by the speed at which vehicles are driven and the type of road travelled.
- 15.7 The additional emissions set out above must be set against the estimated 11 tonnes of emissions from the mothballed building, and the estimated 28 tonnes annually from a re-opened school.
- 15.8 During the current school session transport from Kinbrace to Helmsdale has operated every day without disruption.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 16.1 Kinbrace Primary and Helmsdale Primary schools have, in practice, operated as a single school since Kinbrace was "mothballed" in 2013. There will be no impact on staff and school management arrangements from a formal closure of Kinbrace Primary School.
- 16.2 A continuation of the current mothballing arrangement will have no effect on current staffing arrangements at Helmsdale Primary.

- 16.3 There are no staffing implications at present for Melvich Primary, as there are no resident pupils within the planned re-zoned catchment. Staffing implications for Melvich be considered in future if there were to be pupils in the Forsinard community.
- 16.4 The staffing implications of re-opening Kinbrace Primary School are set out at Paragraph 8.6 above, whilst the financial implications are set out at Section 18 below, together with the associated Appendix.

Effect on the Local Community

- 17.1 There is a village hall in Kinbrace, which provides a public space for the community in the event of the school building being closed and disposed of. The Hall is small in size and does not open during the October-March period.
- 17.2 In the event of the merger proceeding, and subject to the Council not having any operational need for the building, Highland Council would be keen to work with the local community to see whether the current school building could be turned over to community use. Any such proposal would be progressed within the terms of the Council's current asset management policy.
- 17.3 Paragraph 4.6 above explains that the population of the catchment fell by 26% 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.

Financial Consequences

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

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 19.1 A preliminary EQIA assessment is at **Appendix N**.

Rural Impact Assessment

- 20.1 A preliminary Rural Impact Assessment is at **Appendix O**.

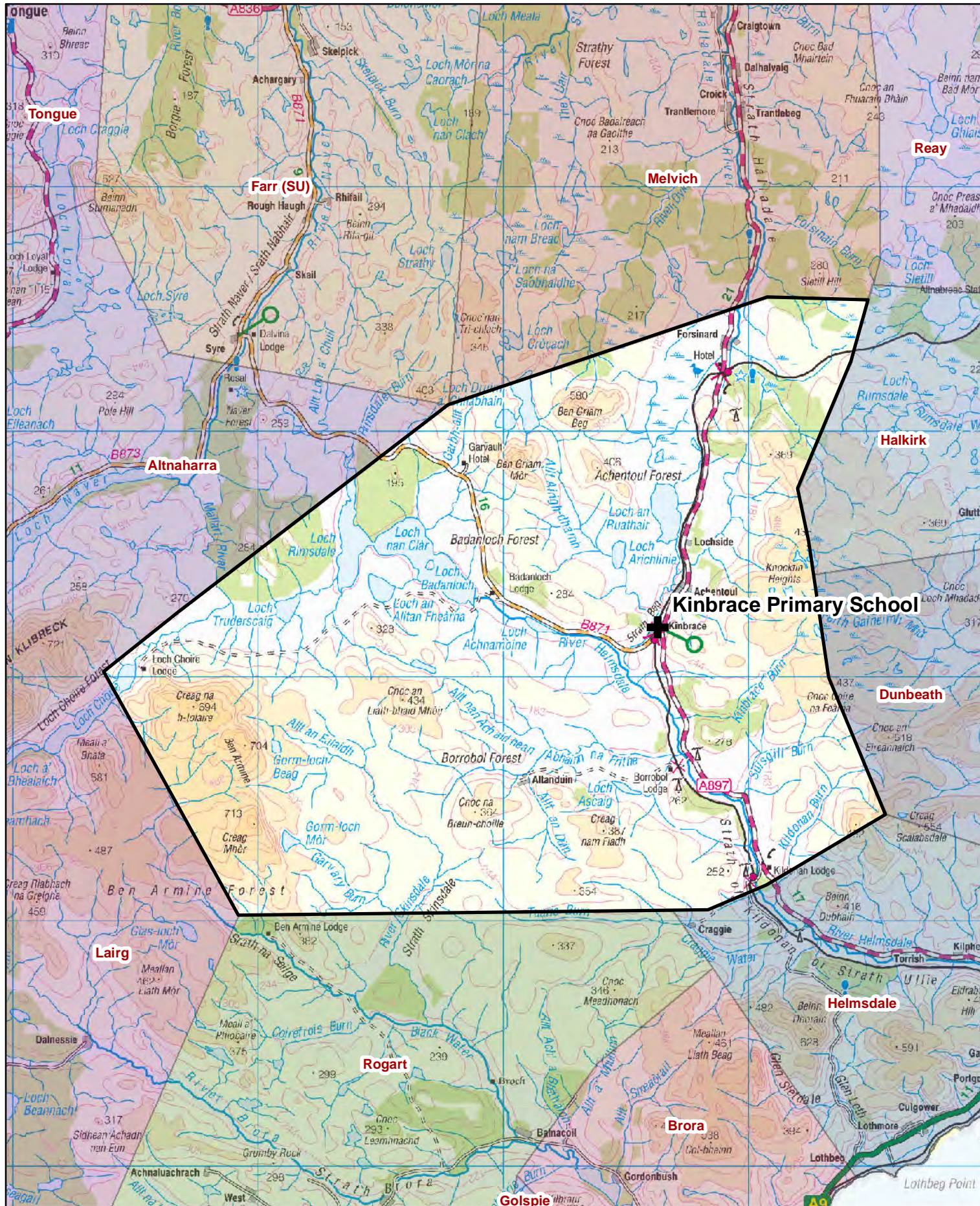
Mitigation of Adverse Effects

- 21.1 The main adverse effect for children in the P1-7 age group is the length of journey from the Kinbrace catchment to Helmsdale, details of which are provided above. However, as the school has been mothballed since 2013, the four current pupils are already making this journey. The population in this area is accustomed to making long journeys to access things that people in urban areas take for granted.
- 21.2 Funded school transport will be provided to P1-7 pupils from Kinbrace attending whichever school catchment their home address is re-assigned to.

- 21.3 Although funded transport is not provided for nursery age children, these children have already been attending either Helmsdale Primary for their pre-school education.
- 21.4 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

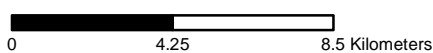
- 22.1 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that the Kinbrace Primary School, currently “mothballed,” is closed and the catchment area re-assigned to that of Helmsdale Primary, with the exception of the community of Forsinard, which will become part of the Melvich Primary School catchment as set out at paragraph 14.3 above.
- 22.2 This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority’s procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee of the Highland Council.



Kinbrace Primary School

**Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013**

1:200,000



1 cm = 2,000 metres

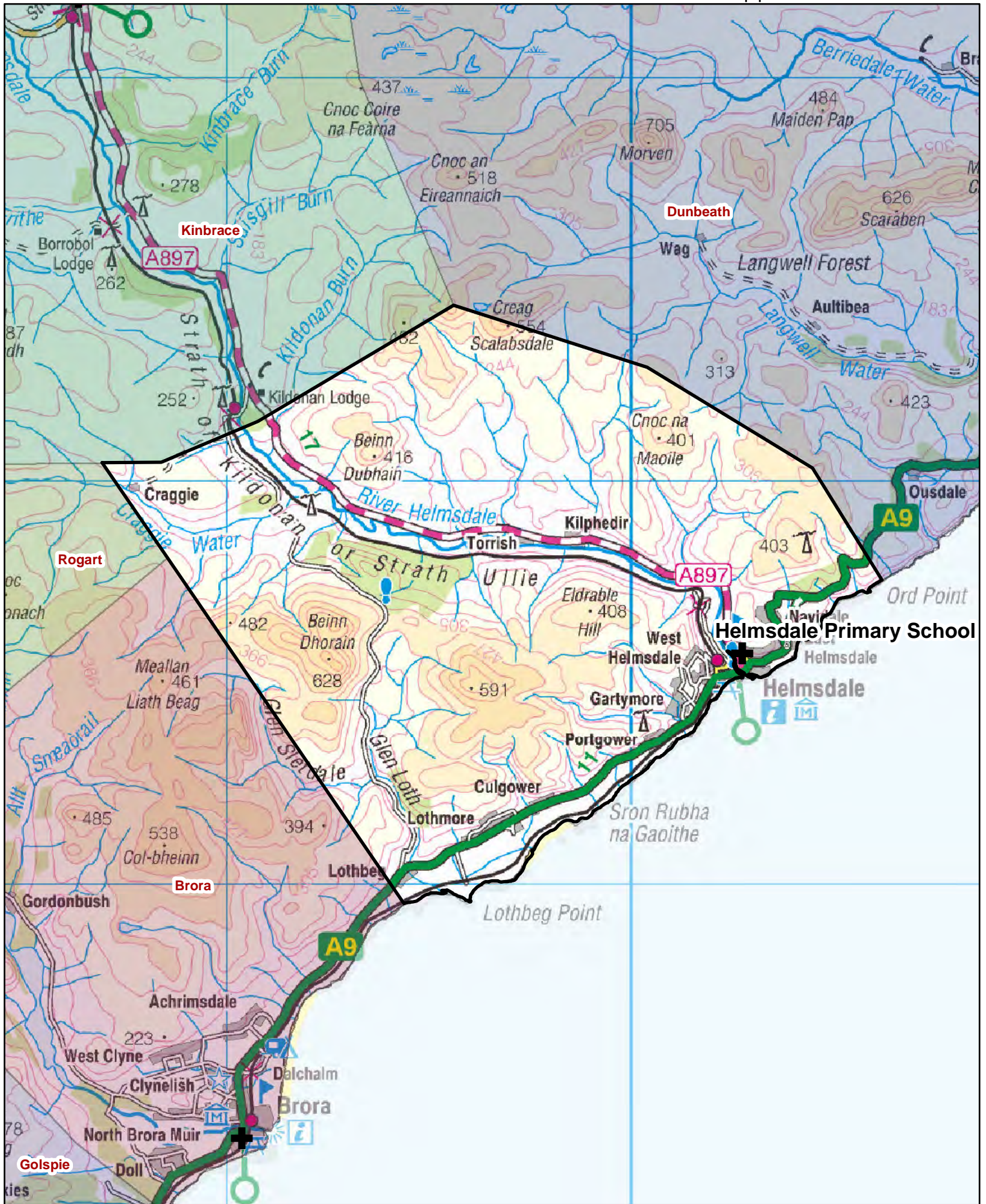
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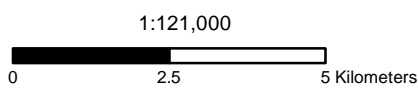
The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Planning & Development Service



Helmsdale Primary School

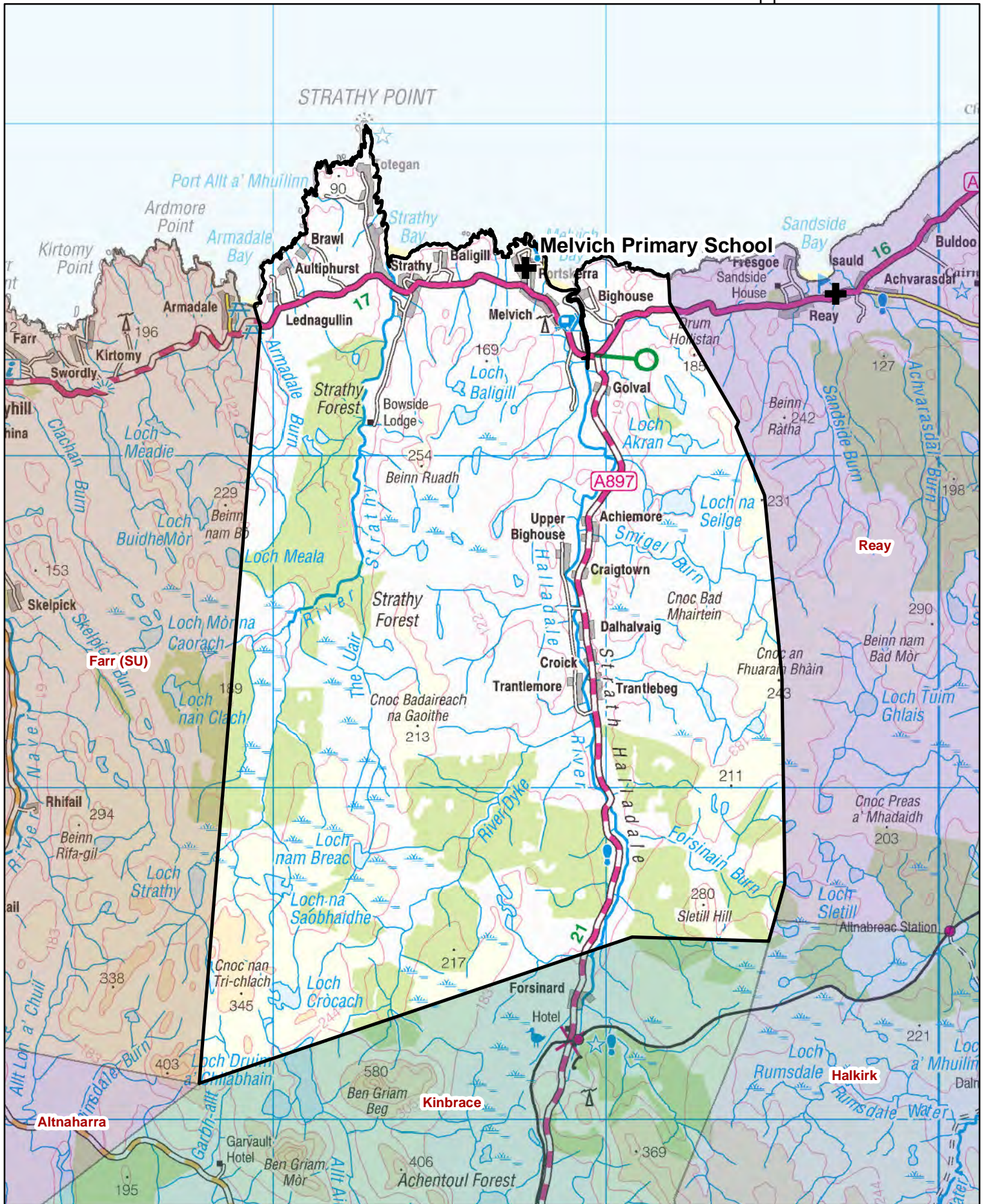
Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013



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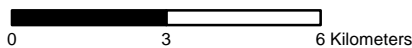
Planning & Development Service



Melvich Primary School

**Primary School
Catchment Boundary
March 2013**

1:147,000



1 cm = 1,470 metres

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Planning & Development Service

Expected Impacts	Formal Closure of Kinbrace PS with re-zoning to Helmsdale and Melvich	Continued Mothballing (as a short-term measure only)	Re-Opening of Kinbrace PS
Availability of Age-Appropriate Peer Group	Both Helmsdale and Melvich offer better opportunities for an age appropriate peer group	Helmsdale offers better opportunities for an age appropriate peer group.	Would not provide for an age-appropriate peer group.
Development of Profiling	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, though potentially with reduced timetable for each school.
Provision for ASN	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.
Personal, Social, Health Needs	Much improved opportunities for socialisation.	Much improved opportunities for socialisation.	Socialisation would be hampered by school roll of 4 or 5.
Equality for All	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.	Appropriate provision.
Morale and Ethos	At present Kinbrace pupils are part of a larger class with opportunities for peer group interaction.	At present Kinbrace 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.	The re-opening of Kinbrace would require new partnership working arrangements, using existing staff.
Standard of Accommodation	The 3 schools have identical ratings.	The 3 schools have identical ratings.	The 3 schools have identical ratings.
Availability of Adequate Professional Network	Taking visiting teachers into account, both Helmsdale and Melvich have adequate professional networks	Taking visiting teachers into account, Helmsdale has an adequate professional network	Would be a single teacher school in an isolated location, with a limited professional network

Access to after-school activities	Access as at present.	Access as at present.	Access might be possible by travelling to Helmsdale or Melvich, but pupils would be less familiar with their peers.
Access to school during adverse weather	Access as at present.	Access as at present.	Improved access due to shorter travel distances.
Location in recognised village	Yes	Yes	Yes
Travel Times	Longest overall travel time is 38 minutes Badanloch-Helmsdale (additional travel time of 28 minutes over reopened Kinbrace)	As at present	Potential maximum travel time of 10 minutes.
Provision of funded school transport for primary age pupils	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provision of funded transport for nursery age pupils	No	No	No, but with reduced travel times.
Community impact	Potential for development for greater community use?	Kinbrace PS is available for community events, but local advice is that usage has reduced since mothballing.	Kinbrace School would be available for community use outwith school hours.
Best Value	Costs as at present.	Costs as at present.	Estimated additional costs of c. £128K



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 Date: 07/04/2016
 Ref: gis1193

Altnaharra Primary School Catchment

Appendix D.

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

ALTNAHARRA

5110025	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								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	0.12
Housing							0	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	0
Cumulative New Houses								0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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		1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	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	0
P I	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	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	0
P III	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	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	0
P V	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	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	0
P VII	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	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	2
Total Capac	19	19	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Tot Roll - To	-12	-13	-19	-19	-20	-20	-20	-23	-23	-22	-23	-22	-23	-23	-22	-22	-23	-23	-23	-23	-23	-23
(Tot Roll/To	37%	32%	24%	24%	20%	20%	20%	8%	8%	12%	9%	10%	8%	9%	10%	11%	9%	9%	9%	10%	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 P I-PVII figures may not be exactly the same as the Total Roll

Appendix Di.

2015/16 School Roll Forecast

HELMSDALE

51110823	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								5	3	7												
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		8	10	5	8	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
N4		4	9	9	4	7	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P I	10	7	5	10	9	4	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P II	4	11	7	5	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P III	8	4	9	7	3	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P IV	3	8	5	8	8	3	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P V	3	3	7	4	8	9	3	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
P VI	9	3	4	6	4	7	8	3	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
P VII	6	9	3	4	6	4	8	8	3	9	10	5	9	5	3	7	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total Roll	43	45	40	44	47	46	52	49	44	48	44	38	38	34	34	36	34	35	35	36	37	
Total Capac	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116	116
Tot Roll - To	-73	-71	-76	-72	-69	-70	-64	-67	-72	-68	-72	-78	-78	-82	-82	-80	-82	-81	-81	-81	-80	-79
(Tot Roll/To	37%	39%	34%	38%	41%	40%	45%	42%	38%	42%	38%	33%	33%	29%	29%	31%	29%	30%	30%	31%	32%	

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

MELVICH	ACTUAL							FORECAST															
	5110122	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									3	3	5												
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		4	1	1	1	2	3		5	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		
N4		7	3	1	2	1	3		3	5	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		
P I	7	4	5	4	1	0	3		3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	
P II	2	6	3	6	4	2	0		3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	
P III	6	2	6	4	5	4	2		0	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	
P IV	1	6	2	5	4	4	4		2	0	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	
P V	5	1	5	2	7	4	4		4	2	0	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	
P VI	3	4	0	5	2	7	4		4	4	2	0	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	
P VII	2	3	5	0	6	2	7		4	4	4	2	0	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	
Total Roll	26	26	26	26	29	23	24		20	19	19	18	19	22	23	23	24	22	23	24	24	25	
Total Capac	83	50	50	50	50	50	50		50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	
Tot Roll - To	-57	-24	-24	-24	-21	-27	-26		-30	-31	-31	-32	-31	-28	-27	-27	-26	-28	-27	-26	-26	-25	
(Tot Roll/To	31%	52%	52%	52%	58%	46%	48%		40%	37%	39%	37%	39%	45%	45%	46%	47%	45%	46%	47%	49%	50%	

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 - KINBRACE

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 local parents and residents in Kinbrace, as well as with Helmsdale Community Council.

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 areas of Kinbrace Primary School, and parents of pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School, and Golspie High School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) All pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School and Altnaharra Primary School;
- (iii) All pupils attending Farr and Golspie High Schools;
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) The Parent Councils of Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School.
- (vi) Staff of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and of Farr and Golspie High Schools.
- (vii) Trade Union representatives;
- (viii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 2 schools;
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (x) Local Youth Convenor;
- (xi) The owners of the Suisgill, Achentoul and Borrobol Estates;
- (xii) Members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership.

and will be published on the Council website.

Publication of advertisement 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 30 May 2016. The consultation will thereafter run until close of business on 24 August 2016 which includes a period of 31 school days.

Public meeting

A public meeting will be held at 7.00pm on 22 June at Kinbrace 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 5 September 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. HMI will then prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal not later than 23 September 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 in December 2016, prior to submission to the ECAS Committee in January 2017. However, this timescale may depend 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.

A decision to close the Centre, if approved at ECAS Committee in January 2017, would require to be confirmed by the full Highland Council, most probably in March 2017.

Scottish Ministers Call-in

In the event that the Council decides to close the school at this 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.

**Helmsdale Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
2 September 2008**

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4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	4
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1. Background

Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class were inspected in April 2008 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and 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 the quality of the children's experience in the nursery, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met with representatives of the Parent Council, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and groups of parents¹.

The school serves the village of Helmsdale and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 48, including 13 children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. Over the past two sessions there had been no permanent headteacher in post. There had been two different arrangements for acting headship. At the time of the inspection the present acting headteacher was on sick leave.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Polite, well behaved nursery children and primary pupils.
- The welcoming and inclusive ethos.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils and the attention paid by all staff to pupils' care and welfare.

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

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, pupils and staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. Parents felt that the school was caring and supportive of their children. Parents expressed discontent about the length of time the school had been without a permanent headteacher. Pupils said they were happy at the school and that the staff made learning enjoyable. The staff enjoyed working in the school and were committed to its further development.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The overall quality of the curriculum in the nursery class was good. Staff in the nursery class provided children with an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. Children actively engaged in activities which were appropriate to their individual needs. Appropriate transition arrangements were in place between nursery and P1 which included information sharing, teacher visits and a buddying system with P6 pupils. Staff in the early stages of primary had not yet developed high quality approaches to active learning to build on children's experiences in the nursery. The overall quality of the curriculum at the primary stages was satisfactory and took appropriate account of national and education authority guidance. Visiting specialist teachers made effective contributions to pupils' learning in the expressive arts. All pupils received appropriate physical education and benefited from additional after-school activities organised by the Active Schools Coordinator. Through the programme for personal and social development (PSD), pupils were learning how to keep safe and stay healthy. Pupils received informative talks from the local policeman on the dangers of substance misuse. The programme of environmental studies gave pupils opportunities for learning about local and world topics. The programme did not yet fully ensure the progressive development of pupils' skills. School staff had still to develop the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enrich all areas of the curriculum. Across the school and in the nursery, the quality of teaching and staff interaction was good overall. Nursery staff interactions with children were very well judged and were sensitive to the needs of individual children. They consistently and effectively used questioning and discussion to extend children's thinking and build upon prior learning. At the primary stages, teachers gave clear explanations, used praise well and set appropriate homework. They shared the learning intentions of lessons with pupils. Teachers used questioning effectively and gave pupils encouraging written feedback. Staff did not always use pupils' responses to further develop their learning and did not always give pupils guidance on how to improve.

Children's experiences in the nursery were good and all children took part in a wide range of engaging learning opportunities. Children responded well to the play

experiences offered and almost all showed high levels of motivation and independence. Many children collaborated in activities to succeed in achieving goals. Almost all children were making good progress with their learning. Staff discussed activities with children throughout the session and took account of their interests but did not yet fully involve children in thinking about their learning. In the primary classes, pupils' learning experiences were satisfactory. Pupils were keen to learn and participated well in all lessons. They were well behaved and maintained good concentration. They responded well to questions and were motivated to learn. Pupils had too few opportunities for choice or responsibility for their own learning. Overall, the pace of learning was appropriate. Too many lessons lacked sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. There were too few opportunities for active play and learning within classes.

Improvements in performance

The school had successfully improved its performance in a number of important areas. Children in the nursery class were making good progress in developing their communication and language skills. Almost all children could confidently contribute to conversations and make their needs and ideas known to each other and other adults. They listened well to each other and enjoyed listening to stories. Most children recognised their own name in print and a few purposefully practised their emerging writing skills during play. A few children were developing an effective knowledge of letter sounds.

At the primary stages, the overall quality of attainment in English language was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. Around half of these pupils were attaining these earlier than might normally be expected. All pupils listened well to their teachers and could follow instructions effectively. They were confident in expressing answers and opinions. At the early stages, pupils were making good progress in beginning to read with understanding. At the middle and upper stages, pupils discussed and answered questions well on the texts they were reading. At all stages, pupils wrote regularly for a variety of purposes. For example, pupils in the early stages were making good progress in writing about their topic. In the middle and upper stages pupils wrote well-structured plays with appropriate stage directions. Pupils' presentation of written work was not of a consistently high standard.

In the nursery class, children were making good progress in early mathematical learning. Most children were able to sort and name shapes in a range of situations and count up to ten. They were developing a good understanding of measure through play activities. They used appropriate mathematical language and engaged with measuring equipment in a meaningful way.

Across the primary stages, standards in mathematics were good. Most pupils were attaining appropriate national levels. Those with additional support needs were making good progress in their learning. Pupils at P1 had developed a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts. Across the school, pupils were able to collect and organise information. Their skills in organising and displaying data using ICT were not well developed. At P4, pupils knew how to work with simple fractions and decimals when recording money or using calculator displays. By P7, pupils' written calculations were

good. They were less competent in mental strategies and calculations involving multiplication facts and decimals. At P2 and P3, pupils were able to place events in time sequences and could tell time using analogue and digital displays. At P7, pupils had a good knowledge of angles, shape and symmetry. They could identify correctly a range of shapes and discuss their properties. At all stages, pupils used a narrow range of strategies in problem-solving and enquiry. Their skills in applying strategies in a variety of problem solving contexts were not well developed.

Children in the nursery class were making good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They were developing investigative skills for example, as they explored the properties of eggs and water. Children worked together well to create large constructions with foam shapes. In their expressive and aesthetic development, children responded creatively to a range of interesting art materials and engaged enthusiastically in role play. They were developing their confidence and skills in balancing, crawling and controlling balls, through a wide range of energetic activities.

At the middle and upper stages, pupils engaged in lively music making and singing linked to their topic. In physical education, pupils at P4 to P7 took part energetically in an effective fitness programme. In technology, they responded well to questions on food additives and how to eat healthily. At the early stages, pupils were confident in discussing their farming topic.

Staff celebrated nursery children's and primary pupils' achievements. However, pupils did not have opportunities to take part in a range of wider activities to develop citizenship. Pupils along with parents and staff had effectively organised fundraising events to purchase and install a new adventure course in the playground. Pupils at all stages gained confidence by performing a concert at Christmas time for the parents and community. The pupil council had been active in planning improvements to the school and supporting positive relationships within the school. The school had achieved the highest award as a Health Promoting School.

Over the last two sessions, the authority had not found it possible to appoint a permanent headteacher. As a consequence, various arrangements to provide acting headship had been put in place. The staff had made some progress in improving aspects of provision identified in the school's improvement plan but overall progress had been slow. While staff had effectively maintained pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics, they had not ensured opportunities for pupils to experience a range of activities to promote personal and wider achievement.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The arrangements to meet learning needs in the nursery and the primary school were good. Nursery staff knew individual children very well. They made regular observations of children at play and used this information effectively to monitor children's progress and to plan the next steps for learning. They had yet to involve children in this process. Staff were sensitive to the needs of individual children who needed additional support for their learning. In the primary classes, teachers used a range of effective strategies to identify pupils' learning needs. Tasks and activities were mainly well chosen to meet the needs of

pupils. Some activities did not provide sufficient challenge for higher achieving pupils. Individual pupils were very well supported by class teachers, the visiting learning support teacher and pupil support assistants. Teachers received helpful advice and very good support from the learning support teacher. The school had developed appropriate individualised educational programmes for pupils with additional support needs. Staff set clearly stated, and appropriate learning targets for pupils with additional support needs, reviewed progress regularly and met with parents when annual reports were issued.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	Nursery staff provided effective care and support to children appropriate to their age, ability and confidence. Children enjoyed a range of healthy snack options and were involved in an oral health programme. Staff in the primary school provided pupils with very good pastoral support. Children and pupils were very well looked after. The caring and committed staff knew the nursery children and primary pupils well and were sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs. A clearly stated child protection policy was in place. All staff had received relevant training and were knowledgeable in procedures. Systems were in place to keep pupils safe and deal with the recording of accidents and incidents of bullying and racism. Health promotion and healthy living, including the involvement of a wide range of agencies, were strong features of the school. Transfer arrangements from nursery to P1 and from P7 to Golspie High School were well managed.

Aspect	Comment
<p>Management and use of resources and space for learning</p>	<p>The learning environment was good overall. Children in the nursery had regular access to a secure area for outdoor play. Pupils in the primary school benefited from an attractive playground. All classrooms were spacious, bright and colourfully decorated. The school had good disabled access and security arrangements were appropriate. The gymnasium and stage provided good areas for physical education and drama. The library had been recently refurbished and doubled as a well resourced music room. The unused secondary school wing and playground were unsafe and posed a potential hazard to pupils.</p>
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness</p>	<p>In the nursery class, relationships between staff and children were positive and supportive. Children's work was displayed to good effect and staff regularly celebrated achievement and successes. There was a warm, welcoming atmosphere in the school. Staff had very good relationships with pupils and there was an ethos of mutual respect. There were regular assemblies, supported by the local minister. These provided good opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating pupils' achievements. Equality issues were discussed as part of the PSD and health education programmes. School staff did not do enough to effectively promote diversity and racial equality.</p>
<p>The school's success in involving parents, carers and families</p>	<p>Staff successfully involved parents in the life of the school and kept them suitably informed about their children's progress. Parents worked closely with the school to raise funds. School concerts and parents' evenings were well attended. Parents were appropriately consulted on sensitive health issues. The Parent Council and PTA were active in supporting the school to improve its provision and facilities. Staff had established effective links with the community. These included a link with local businesses to promote tree planting in the playground and helpful links with the local heritage society. Parents supported pupils' reading at the early stages through a home/school diary.</p>

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class provided a positive and supportive learning environment for its children and pupils. Staff were caring and committed. Nursery children were happy and making good progress in the key areas. Primary pupils were hard-working. They attained good standards in reading, writing and mathematics but there was headroom for further improvement. Overall, there were important weaknesses in the school's provision. Limited progress had been made in taking forward important national initiatives, including developing the curriculum. Staff did not always ensure that pupils' learning experiences were stimulating and innovative. Some higher attaining pupils were capable of improving their performance and required further challenge.

The school had been without a permanent headteacher for the past two sessions. The acting headteacher had managed the day-to-day running of the school effectively. She had maintained good relationships and a positive ethos within the school. However, there were important weaknesses in the education authority's strategic leadership of the school which had limited the school's capacity to improve. There had been no support from the authority towards helping the school to develop its provision to ensure pupils made appropriate progress in all aspects of their learning. Overall, the school's arrangements for evaluating its work were weak. There had been limited progress in implementing the recommendations in the school's improvement plan. The school had not yet developed systematic arrangements for monitoring the curriculum and tracking pupils' progress. With appropriate support from the education authority, the staff have the capacity to improve.

Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice. At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one requirement that the provider required to action in relation to procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. This had been addressed. There was one recommendation relating to support for staff training which had not been actioned.

Main points for action

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should take action to ensure improvement in:

- the quality of the curriculum to ensure pupils' progress in all aspects of learning;
- monitoring, evaluating and planning the work of the school in order to improve the educational experiences of all pupils;
- the overall quality of leadership in the school; and
- pupils' safety within the school playing areas.

What happens next?

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Pat May
Managing 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	satisfactory
Teaching for effective learning	good
Children's experiences (nursery class)	good
Learners' experiences (primary stages)	satisfactory
Improvements in performance (nursery class)	good
Improvements in performance (primary stages)	good

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

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

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

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"> • Ensured children were happy in the school. • Provided helpful and informative parent evenings. • Treated children fairly. • Explained how parents could help with homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents with a clear idea of the school's priorities for improving education.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly and helped them enjoy school. • Teachers helped them with class work, told them how they were getting on and how they could improve. • Helped pupils stay safe and healthy. • Allowed pupils a say in how to improve the school. 	<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"> • Maintained good relationships with the community. • All staff enjoyed working in the school. • The school showed care and concern for all pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school needed leadership to promote teamwork. • Facilitate continuing professional development.

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.

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**Helmsdale Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
30 June 2009**

We published a report on Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class in September 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in May 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school¹ provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents². Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

¹ The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

² Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

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1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class serves the village of Helmsdale and the surrounding area. A new headteacher took up post in August 2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Courteous, motivated and well-behaved children.
- The approach to active learning and purposeful play in the nursery and the early stages.
- Positive impact of the headteacher in leading school improvement.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

In the nursery, children are achieving success across all areas of their learning. They are becoming increasingly independent, developing good social skills and growing in confidence. Within early literacy and numeracy, children are making very good progress. The majority of children from P1 to P7 are making good progress in listening, talking, reading and mathematics. Children's attainment in writing in P4 to P7 has fallen in recent years. The new headteacher is taking positive steps to tackle this decline. Children listen well in class and are confident in talking in groups. Children at the early stages are developing a better understanding of early number work. Across the school, children enjoy working together. Children are showing good skills in music and physical education.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Staff are beginning to develop aspects of the national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Teachers ensure children in the nursery and the early stages have frequent opportunities to learn well through active play. Staff are starting to plan more effectively to link different aspects of children's learning. At all stages children now have regular opportunities to work together in pairs or groups to develop and extend

their learning. Staff are beginning to use assessment information more effectively to monitor children's progress. As a result, more tasks, activities and resources are now better matched to meet most children's needs. Support staff work closely with teachers and provide well-judged help to individuals and small groups of children.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

The school receives effective support and help from the Parent Council. Older children successfully support younger ones, helping them at morning intervals and lunchtimes. The headteacher is beginning to discuss teaching, learning, planning and assessment with teachers and give helpful advice and support. Teachers are improving the procedures to ensure children's safety within the playground. Arrangements are now in place to allow some staff to visit other schools to observe different teaching methods and share what they are doing. These initiatives are helping to improve the quality of children's learning.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

The school is beginning to make further improvements to courses, programmes, and assessment arrangements. Staff now have much higher expectations of children's attainment and achievement. They now need to continue to develop more challenging and enjoyable learning activities which will ensure attainment improves. They also need to continue to help children to understand how they can improve their work.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The school is taking forward improvements and is making progress. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the school's strengths

and areas for improvement. He recognises the need to continue to improve the good start he has made in meeting his vision for the school. Overall, the school now performs better and shows a strong capacity to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

Staff are taking positive early steps towards making Helmsdale Primary School a better school. In some areas they are making significant progress. Further work is required to sustain the positive changes and improve children's attainment. We will continue to engage with the school and education authority. As set out in the original report of September 2008, we will carry out a further follow-through visit to the school. We will report to parents, within one year of the publication of this report, on the extent of the improvement that has been achieved.

HM Inspector: David M Martin
30 June 2009

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**Helmsdale Primary School
and Nursery Class
The Highland Council
15 June 2010**

We published a report on Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class in September 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out a follow-through inspection in May 2009 and published a report on that visit in June 2009.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in April 2010. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school¹ provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents². Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

¹ The term 'school' is used to include the work of the nursery class, where relevant.

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7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class serves the village of Helmsdale and the surrounding area.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Enthusiastic and well-motivated children in the nursery and P1-P3 classes.
- Children's positive behaviour.
- Promising start made by the school in taking forward initiatives related to *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Staff's effective contributions to the care and welfare of children.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Children in the nursery class are motivated and keen to learn. Teachers at the early stages continue to build very effectively on how children learn in the nursery. At all stages, children now work well together in pairs and small groups. Most children benefit from examples of very effective teaching, in which they are encouraged to be responsible, independent learners and to think for themselves. This practice is still not yet consistent across the school. The school has maintained good standards of attainment in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics. Most children are achieving expected national levels. Those in the early stages are achieving earlier than might normally be expected. These early gains are still not maintained as children progress through the middle and upper stages.

In the nursery class, staff provide an enjoyable and appropriate curriculum. They discuss and review children's learning experiences effectively. At the primary stages, teachers provide an appropriately well structured variety of learning experiences. Teachers have made a good start to implementing aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Children are continuing to develop an appropriate awareness of the need to care for the environment. As a result, the school has won an

Eco-Schools Scotland Bronze Award. Children still do not receive two hours of good quality physical education each week.

In the nursery class, staff are sensitive to children's family circumstances. Staff are aware of factors that might hinder learning and address them promptly through well planned group activities. In the primary classes, teachers and support staff give most children useful individual support which helps them in their learning. Most tasks and activities set by teachers are now at the correct level of difficulty for children. The quality of feedback and pace of learning still varies too much throughout the school. Pupils in the middle and upper stages are still too often unsure of what they need to do to improve. Children with additional support needs are now making better progress in their learning.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Teamwork among staff is improving. Most staff now work well together to support the learning of all pupils, including those with additional support needs. Improved monitoring of young people's progress is helping to clarify where their strengths lie and what their next steps in learning are. School staff's communication with parents is now more regular and of a higher quality. Parents have appropriate opportunities to share the start of the day with children in the nursery. Staff continue to work well with a range of agencies in supporting children's learning.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Children willingly take on responsibilities and support each other well. Staff are committed to improving the school community. They are appropriately consulted on how to improve the life and work of the school. They feel that their views are not always acted upon. The

headteacher recognises there is further scope to develop the leadership role of children and staff in the life of the school. The headteacher now regularly visits classes to observe the quality of learning and teaching and comments on teachers' learning plans. He also tracks children's progress in reading, writing and mathematics and regularly monitors children's written work. These arrangements are not yet sufficiently systematic and rigorous.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

All staff expect high standards from pupils in their learning, behaviour and attendance. All children respond well. Teachers make effective use of praise and the school's system of rewards to celebrate children's achievements. Assemblies provide very good opportunities to celebrate children's achievement and for religious observance. All staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. Arrangements for monitoring children's attendance are effective and well managed.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The headteacher is highly committed to the school and to improving the quality of children's experiences. He has gained the trust of almost all parents and most staff. He has successfully introduced a number of important changes in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. The headteacher now needs to monitor the work of the school more effectively to ensure that all children achieve their full potential. With the continuing support of the education authority, the school has the capacity to improve further.

8. What happens next?

There is evidence of significant improvement since the original inspection. The school now performs better overall. Arrangements for

self-evaluation and meeting learning needs are now at a satisfactory level or better. We will make no further visits to the school in connection with the inspection report of September 2008. As part of ongoing liaison between HMIE and the education authority, our District Inspector will continue to monitor the school's progress.

HM Inspector: David Martin

15 June 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

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

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Appendix G.

**Melvich Primary School
Thurso
The Highland Council
19 December 2006**

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1. Background

Melvich Primary School was inspected in September 2006 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 School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the village of Melvich and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 27, including five children in the nursery class. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well below the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

The school had not had a permanent headteacher for the past two years. Between the retirement of the previous permanent headteacher in June 2004 and the appointment of the current headteacher, the school had been led by a number of acting headteachers. At the time of the inspection, a new, permanent headteacher had been in post for five weeks. She was headteacher of a group of three local primary schools, including Melvich Primary School.

The work of the nursery class was not included in this inspection.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The commitment of teaching staff during a period of discontinuity.
- Approaches adopted by the new headteacher and staff to improve pupils' learning experiences.
- Productive relationships between staff and parents, and the important part played by the school in the local community.

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

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 many aspects of the school's work. All thought teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment and that their children were treated fairly in school. A minority of parents had concerns about recent discontinuity in staffing, particularly its effects on the management and leadership of the school. Pupils were very positive about the school. They reported that teachers expected them to work as hard as they could, and that the school helped them to keep themselves safe and healthy. Almost all staff were very positive in their responses and in discussion. They thought that teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment and that pupils were enthusiastic about learning. A few felt that communication amongst staff had not always been effective.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The quality of the curriculum was weak. There had been a lack of sustained attention to the development of the curriculum. Teachers provided a generally broad curriculum for pupils. Regular input from visiting teachers of music and physical education (PE) helped enhance the range of pupils' learning experiences. Good use of a range of visits and visitors helped teachers provide appropriate depth to aspects of the curriculum. Led by the new headteacher, teachers had started to review and improve how they planned suitably progressive experiences for all pupils. This, however, was at an early stage of development. Overall, pupils' learning experiences lacked progression and were too restricted, with insufficient attention to, for example, the development of citizenship and enterprise skills. The curriculum in reading was based on too limited a range of resources and experiences. The quality of teaching was adequate. Teachers had had limited opportunity to take part in appropriate staff development experiences. However, both class teachers had worked hard to ensure that their teaching met the needs of pupils. They had established positive and productive relationships with their pupils. Their explanations were clear and helpful. They ensured that pupils understood the tasks set and what was expected of them in their work. Homework was regular and, increasingly, well organised. Use of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching was too limited. Teachers did not yet share learning intentions openly with pupils nor did they summarise key learning points at the end of lessons.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was adequate. At times, the pace of individual lessons was brisk. Almost all pupils were well motivated and keen to learn. Older pupils responded well and thoughtfully in well-managed class discussions. In P1-4, pupils' learning was enhanced through active opportunities to reflect on their ideas and experiences. At P5-7, pupils made good use of clear criteria to help them develop their writing. During PE lessons, pupils cooperated very well together, learning to work for the benefit of a team. Pupils' use of ICT in their learning was too

limited. Across the curriculum, they did not yet have a clear enough understanding of what they needed to do to make further progress in their work. The pace of learning did not always offer consistent and sufficient challenge for a few pupils.

The school had taken some positive and effective steps to help develop pupils' wider achievements. Most pupils were confident and cooperated well with each other and with adults. The new headteacher had improved how the school consulted pupils. As a result, pupils felt that they now had good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Members of the pupil council had recently reviewed the school rules. Pupils regularly participated in local competitions in a range of relevant areas. As part of their preparation for transfer to Farr High School, older pupils benefited from an annual residential experience aimed at helping them to get to know their new classmates. Pupils were aware of the needs of others and, with their parents, had helped to raise significant sums of money for charity. Overall, however, pupils did not yet have sufficient and sustained opportunities to exercise responsibility in the school.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was adequate. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment in reading and writing. A minority of pupils at some stages were attaining national levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils who were experiencing difficulty in their classwork were receiving appropriate support and, overall, were making good progress. Most pupils listened well to instructions and spoke confidently with the teacher and other adults. A few were not skilled at listening to others. Pupils' skills in group discussion were insufficiently developed and required improvement. Most pupils read fluently, several with good expression. At P7, pupils talked confidently about features of the books they had read. Pupils wrote for a range of purposes and in an increasing number of styles. Their progress in writing was not, however, consistently good across the stages.

Mathematics

In mathematics, the overall quality of attainment was good. Most pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. At some stages, a few pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils requiring additional support were making appropriate progress in their classwork. Across the stages pupils were able to identify and interpret a range of graphs. They had not, however, developed appropriate skills in the use of computers to collate and display information. Most pupils carried out written calculations confidently. Pupils' skills in mental calculation were good, overall. These included a sound grasp of number bonds in the early stages. Most pupils demonstrated a good understanding of appropriate aspects of shape and measurement. A few pupils lacked a sufficient grasp of angles and their properties. Pupils were not sufficiently confident in using an appropriate range of strategies to solve problems.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

Overall, staff met the learning needs of pupils adequately. In her short time in post, the headteacher had prioritised the need to support staff in how they addressed pupils' needs. Tasks set were well matched to the needs of most pupils. Teachers knew the pupils as individuals and regularly adapted their teaching approaches to support pupils in their learning. Teachers recognised the broad range of learning needs in multi-stage composite classes and sought to ensure appropriate challenge for all. However, weaknesses in the curriculum, including a lack of progression in learning experiences, impacted upon teachers' ability to meet the learning needs of pupils fully. Staff did not always offer sufficient challenge to ensure that the most able pupils achieved to their potential. The part-time support for learning teacher worked cooperatively and effectively with class teachers to offer support and challenge in pupils' writing. Support staff provided helpful additional assistance for a range of pupils. Staff had developed effective links with a number of agencies, including speech therapy, to help them provide targeted support for pupils.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The quality of pastoral care was good. Staff knew pupils very well and were responsive to their social, emotional and physical needs. The school had well developed approaches to deal with incidences of bullying. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that staff were good at dealing with bullying. With the support of the headteacher, staff implemented effectively the school's approaches to ensuring child protection and were aware of their responsibilities as part of this. Adult supervision of pupils during interval was limited. The headteacher had begun to review this situation and to take steps to address the concerns of some parents. The school placed an increasingly strong emphasis on health promotion. This included participation in a range of events designed to introduce pupils to a number of sports and activities and the active promotion of healthy eating. Older pupils were developing useful skills in personal safety.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of accommodation and facilities was adequate. Staff and pupils had access to a suitable range of provision including a large general purposes room and a separate dining area. Staff, including visiting teachers, made good use of the accommodation in their interaction with pupils. The headteacher and staff had recently taken effective steps to improve the appearance of the school and to ensure a more attractive learning environment for pupils. Further work was required to ensure a consistently attractive environment. Large parts of the playground surface were uneven and required upgrading. This was a potential hazard for pupils during play. The headteacher had correctly identified the need to review building security arrangements. This review was being undertaken. Access for those with physical disabilities was restricted.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The climate in the school was positive. Teachers displayed a high level of care and respect towards children. Pupils were considerate towards each other, and towards staff and visitors. There was an improving sense of teamwork in the school. Staff reported that the appointment of the new headteacher had contributed positively to their improving morale. Expectations of pupils' behaviour were good. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' progress were not consistently high enough. Prior to the appointment of the headteacher, assemblies and opportunities for religious observance had been too infrequent. This was now being addressed. Pupils were treated fairly at school. The school did not, however, promote pupils' understanding of race equality and diversity through the curriculum sufficiently consistently.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school's partnerships with parents and the wider community were good. The headteacher had taken immediate and effective steps to improve the school handbook. Communication between school and home was effective and improving. Staff consulted parents appropriately on sensitive health issues. Regular newsletters were informative and helpful to parents. A new homework guide for parents provided useful information on what parents should expect in terms of homework. It also offered helpful hints in how to support their children in this work. The school did not yet share with parents how they could fully support their children in their learning. Parents supported the school well. The PTA organised a number of popular social and fundraising events. Members of the recently reformed School Board had been involved in the appointment of the new headteacher. The school had established effective and mutually supportive links with the wider community. Local groups made regular use of the school's community room.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Melvich Primary School provided its pupils with an adequate quality of education. Parents were very satisfied with most aspects of the school and had responded positively to the recent appointment of a permanent headteacher. Pupils felt safe and well looked after. Staff ensured that pupils were well cared for in school. However, the quality of education provided for pupils required further improvement. This included the need to improve the curriculum and aspects of learning and teaching. Attainment in English language was not sufficiently strong in a number of areas.

In her short time in post, the new headteacher had quickly established positive relationships with staff, pupils and parents. She had communicated clearly arrangements for the management of the school for those days when she was not present. She had started to involve the school community in identifying appropriate strengths and priorities for development. Staff had responded very positively to this and were keen to support the headteacher in improving provision for pupils. Overall, there had been important weaknesses in the leadership of the school over a period of time. The school had lacked a clear strategic direction. While school staff had worked hard to maintain and develop provision, there had been insufficient attention to improving the quality of pupils' learning and achievement. Over the course of this period, the school had not established and implemented sufficiently rigorous approaches to self-evaluation. This had resulted in insufficient support and challenge for staff and for pupils. As a result, progress in a number of areas, including how staff monitored pupils' attainment, had been hindered significantly. The headteacher

now required the active support of the education authority to develop the school's capacity for improvement and to ensure that identified improvements are addressed and overtaken.

Main points for action

The education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should ensure appropriate support and challenge for the new headteacher to ensure continuous improvement in the school. The school and education authority should also take action to ensure improvement in:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the support and advice provided for staff to help them improve the quality of learning, teaching and achievement for pupils;
- how pupils' attainment is monitored and progressed; and
- the condition of facilities for outdoor play.

What happens next?

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Peter McNaughton
HM Inspector

19 December 2006

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	weak
The teaching process	adequate
Pupils' learning experiences	adequate
Pupils' attainment in English language	adequate
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership across the school	weak
Self-evaluation	weak

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.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school had a good reputation in the local community. • Teachers gave them helpful information about their child's progress. • They were made to feel welcome in the school. • Staff treated all children fairly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents thought that school buildings were not kept in good order and that the school was not well led.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils were very satisfied with all aspects of the work of the school. 	<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 very satisfied with all aspects of the work of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

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Appendix Gi.

**Melvich Primary School
Thurso
Interim follow-through
The Highland Council
18 December 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of Melvich Primary School in December 2006. The report indicated that HM Inspectors would engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress and would publish an interim report within one year of the publication of the original report.

Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report. HM Inspectors carried out an interim follow-through visit to the school in October 2007. The team assessed the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and evaluated progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

Teaching staff had taken effective steps to improve their professional practice by attending helpful training events organised by the education authority. School staff had made effective use of new resources to develop pupils' skills in mental mathematics, and improve reading at the early stages. A new teacher had been recently appointed in the P1 to P3 class.

The school and education authority had improved aspects of the school's accommodation including the redecoration of teaching areas. The headteacher had leadership responsibilities for three primary schools. She met regularly with staff to offer advice, monitor the quality of the school's work and discuss pupils' progress. She had effectively sought pupils' views through the pupil council and involved pupils more in deciding how to make improvements to the school's work. Pupils had benefited from a range of helpful cultural and sporting activities undertaken as part of The Highland Year of Culture. Visiting specialists included Feis Rois music tutors who enhanced pupils' experiences of traditional music.

Staff had given pupils valuable opportunities to become responsible citizens and considerate members of the school and wider community. These had included pupils' involvement in carol singing and in visits to the local senior citizens' home. Staff had improved arrangements for parents to support their children's learning. These included the introduction of a new home/school diary and better homework activities for P4 to P7 pupils.

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in December 2006 identified four main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Improve the quality of the curriculum.

The school had made some positive progress in meeting this main point for action.

The headteacher had put in place structured programmes in many curriculum areas and had provided appropriate useful written guidance. This guidance had assisted staff in ensuring the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in key areas. The headteacher had worked effectively with the education authority's Active Schools Coordinator to provide additional opportunities for pupils to engage in energetic physical activity. The headteacher had introduced helpful new resources and worked effectively with staff to promote pupils' use of information and communications technology. This work had yet to have significant impact in ensuring the consistent development of pupils' skills in this area. More remained to be done to ensure effective planning of programmes and evaluation of their effectiveness, particularly in personal and social development, and citizenship. Pupils' understanding of race equality and diversity was not yet sufficiently consistent or regular.

3.2 Improve the support and advice provided for staff to help them improve the quality of learning, teaching and achievement for pupils.

The school and education authority had made a useful start to addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher and education authority staff had provided a range of helpful advice and support to teachers. This included regular meetings with staff to share good practice. Teachers now shared their expectations more effectively with pupils. They set out clearly for pupils what they expected them to learn and most pupils were responding well. Teachers gave pupils helpful feedback on how to improve their work, particularly in writing. Pupils had increased opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups, for example, on writing and problem solving tasks. The headteacher had introduced helpful new planning procedures. These had not yet had significant impact in improving pupils' learning experiences. Staff now assessed pupils' day-to-day progress well but did not yet use this information effectively to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers did not always ensure that tasks set were sufficiently challenging to meet all pupils' needs. More remained to be done to ensure that aspects of good practice in learning and teaching were maintained consistently throughout the school.

3.3 Improve how pupils' attainment is monitored and progressed.

The school had made some progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher had established an annual timetable which set out clearly how the school would evaluate its provision. She monitored teachers' plans and commented in writing upon the quality of planning. The headteacher sampled pupils' jotters and tracked pupils' progress more effectively, using materials supplied by the education authority. She had visited classes to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and had shared her written comments with teaching staff. These arrangements were not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure that appropriate action was taken to remedy identified weaknesses. The quality of learning and teaching was not yet consistent throughout the school and attainment in English language and mathematics had not improved.

3.4 Improve the condition of facilities for outdoor play.

The education authority had made little progress in addressing this main point for action.

The pupil council had successfully raised funds and purchased new outdoor play equipment. The education authority had not yet improved the playground surface to make it suitable for playground games. Much remained to be done to ensure that pupils had an appropriately safe area in which to play.

4. Conclusion

The school and education authority had made a promising start to meeting some of the main points for action in the inspection report of December 2006. Progress in addressing other main points for action had been slower. The headteacher had improved aspects of the curriculum and had provided helpful support and advice to staff. Much remained to be done to improve the accommodation and ensure that all pupils made appropriate progress. Working with the continuing support of the education authority, the headteacher had the capacity to improve the school further. HMIE will continue to engage with the school and education authority and will provide another report on progress for parents and carers within one year of the publication of this report.

June Graham
HM Inspector

18 December 2007

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**Melvich Primary School
Thurso
The Highland Council
16 December 2008**

We published a report on Melvich Primary School in December 2006. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out an interim follow-through inspection in October 2007 and we published a report on this visit in December 2007. This is the report of the follow-through inspection, carried out in October 2008.

This follow-through report tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well children are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

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

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2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do children learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?
5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Melvich Primary School serves the village of Melvich and the surrounding area. An acting headteacher has led the school since December 2007, when the headteacher took up another post. The acting headteacher also has leadership responsibility for Farr Primary School.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- Polite, confident and enthusiastic children.
- Improvements to the school's accommodation.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Children are effectively developing their confidence and self esteem through participating in a range of well-planned, interesting activities. For example, those at P4 to P7 have developed useful interview skills through questioning football players about racism in football. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Staff are beginning to improve children's experiences in using information and communications technology to support their learning across the curriculum. Some activities in English language and mathematics do not always provide enough challenge for children, particularly at the early stages. Staff are making a good start in encouraging children to take responsibility for their own learning in all areas of the curriculum.

4. How well do staff work with others to improve children's learning?

Staff are beginning to encourage parents to be more involved in their children's learning. The school needs to continue to develop opportunities to involve parents more in the life of the school. Staff are at the early stages of planning environmental and enterprise activities across the school. The education authority has significantly improved the outdoor playing areas, which are now suitable for playground games and outdoor learning. Security and heating systems are now of an appropriate standard.

Much of the school has been redecorated and improved. Children are now very positive about their learning environment and are responding well.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff are using some effective approaches to ensure children are developing as responsible citizens. These approaches include a range of activities as part of the school's efforts to become an Eco-friendly school. The Pupil Council has been involved in improving some aspects of the accommodation, including toilet facilities. Staff are working well together to improve the reading experiences of children and had sought the views of the Pupil Council about this. More remains to be done to ensure children are fully involved in making decisions to improve their community.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all children?

The school has a welcoming atmosphere and children have positive relationships with their teachers. Staff encourage children to work hard through a range of methods such as the use of reward activities, stickers and certificates. Children respond well, and work keenly and confidently at the tasks set for them. Teachers do not yet have high enough expectations of children's attainment. Staff are committed to the well being and support of all children and are knowledgeable about effective child protection procedures. They know what to do when the acting headteacher is not in school, in connection with her other leadership duties. Children feel safe at school and think that all children are treated fairly. They are confident about discussing any issues of concern with any member of staff.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The acting headteacher, with the support of the education authority, has clearly identified appropriate areas for school improvement. She is working well with staff to develop the school's systems for making improvements. Staff are working together more effectively to evaluate the quality of the school's provision. Staff are beginning to improve the quality of their teaching and the quality of children's learning experiences. Overall, Melvich Primary School has an increasing capacity to continue to improve.

8. What happens next?

There is evidence of improvement since the original inspection, and the school now performs well overall. The curriculum and improvements through self-evaluation are now at a satisfactory level or better. With continued strong leadership, commitment of staff and support from the education authority, the school will have the potential to continue to improve. We will make no further visits in connection with the December 2006 inspection report. The District Inspector will continue to liaise with the education authority in monitoring the school's progress.

HM Inspector: June Graham
16 December 2008

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Appendix H.

**Altnaharra Primary School
and Nursery Class
Sutherland
The Highland Council
11 March 2008**

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1. Background

Altnaharra Primary School and nursery class were inspected in December 2007 as part of a national sample of primary and nursery education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated nursery children's and 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 the quality of the children's experience in the nursery class, pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met parents,¹ including the chairperson of the Parent Council.

The school serves the village of Altnaharra and the surrounding area of central Sutherland. At the time of the inspection the roll was six, including three children in the nursery class. There were no pupils at P2 or at the P4-P7 stages. There was no provision for school meals. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. The headteacher was also headteacher of Lairg Primary School, in accordance with the Council's shared leadership initiative.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- High quality teaching in the primary class, and very good interaction between staff and children in the nursery.
- Staff expectations of pupils, and their efforts to help pupils socialise with pupils from other schools.
- Enthusiastic pupils who were keen to learn, and their attainment in English language and mathematics.
- The excellent ethos in both the nursery and primary classes, including very positive links between parents and staff.

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

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents and staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires normally appears in an Appendix 2. However, as there were fewer than five respondees in each group, in

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

order to maintain confidentiality, the analysis is not provided. 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.

Parents, pupils and staff were very positive about all aspects of the school's provision. Parents of children in the nursery class confirmed that their children enjoyed coming to the nursery, and that staff showed a clear concern for children's care and welfare. They believed that they were kept well informed about the activities of the nursery through their daily contact with the staff. Parents of pupils in the primary class felt that their children were treated well, and that they were making very good progress. They felt that their children enjoyed school, and that teachers were good at letting them know their children's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils confirmed that they were very happy in the school, and that they enjoyed being in a very small school where they all worked very well together. Staff believed that they set high standards for pupils' attainment and behaviour, and that pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. They believed that there was mutual respect between adults and pupils, and that the school was well led.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The curriculum in the nursery class was very good. All areas of children's development and learning were included effectively, and staff had provided a wide range of interesting activities for children. The overall quality of the curriculum in the primary classes was good. Staff provided a wide range of interesting and challenging activities for children, which helped them make appropriate progress. Time was well used, for example, to involve nursery children with the primary class, and develop pupils' social skills through frequent visits to other schools. The school had recently become involved with the Highland Literacy project and this had improved the programme for the teaching of English language. Pupils participated in daily physical exercise as part of two hours of physical education each week, in line with national recommendations. They had also benefited from swimming instruction. Information and communications technology (ICT) was well used as part of the ongoing work of pupils. The school had achieved Health Promoting School status, and pupils were aware of the benefits of healthy eating, exercise and daily toothbrushing. Pupils had designed very good Christmas cards in an enterprise in education project. These were then produced commercially and sold by pupils to raise funds for the school. In citizenship, the staff had focused on helping pupils develop respect and tolerance for others. All pupils were also involved in regular recycling in order to help the environment. The programme for environmental studies should now be reviewed to ensure that pupils made appropriate progress as they moved through the school. Interactions between children and staff in the nursery were very good and helped to develop children's talking and confidence. The teaching in the primary class was of very high quality. The class teacher was very well organised and planned very effectively to improve pupils' learning. She introduced lessons very well and checked pupils' knowledge and understanding when they were finished. She explained matters very clearly, and used praise appropriately to encourage pupils to give of their best. Overall, her direct teaching was very effective in helping pupils make progress. Homework was interesting, and helped to consolidate pupils' learning.

In the nursery class children were making very good use of ICT for a range of purposes. They enjoyed using the wide range of art materials and musical instruments, and were developing control of their hands and fingers through using a range of small tools and construction toys. Pupils in the primary class were making very good progress in their learning. They were enthusiastic and keen to learn. They were very active in their learning and quickly became involved in all of their activities. The pace of work was very good, and helped pupils achieve. At times, nursery children and primary pupils worked very well together, and this was a positive advantage for all of them. Pupils in the primary class were developing good skills in art and design, and were developing their knowledge of cool and warm colours. They sang and performed a play with great enthusiasm and expression. In science, they had developed some knowledge of the life of bumblebees. Pupils had been involved in fair testing in technology to determine the strength of different materials. They had made their own predictions of the results of experiments, and subsequently recorded and interpreted the results of testing effectively.

In the nursery class, children were learning to cooperate with one another and become familiar with the nursery routines. In the primary class pupils were learning about the local environment, and birdlife in particular, through their involvement in an after school Wildlife Explorers Club. They had made very good bird cake which they hung outside. In this, they had benefitted from their membership of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. They had taken part in activities organised by a Countryside ranger which had helped them develop positive attitudes to the environment. They had learned of the needs of others in raising funds for the local community and a range of local, national and international charities.

English language

In the nursery class, staff worked very well with children to help develop their skills in talking. Children listened well and were beginning to talk at length. They enjoyed listening to stories read to them and had begun to write their own stories with the help of adults. The overall quality of attainment in English language in the primary class was very good. Pupils had made a very good start to developing their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing and were making very good progress. Pupils listened very well to adults and each other, and responded very well to instructions given. They responded positively to their teacher's encouragement to talk at length, and were confident in talking to visitors about their work. They had received good guidance on how to improve their talking. By P3, pupils read well and with some fluency. They had a good knowledge of books, and were developing a good reading habit. They benefitted from regular visits of the mobile library. Pupils were developing effective skills in writing for a variety of purposes, and made good use of their individual targets in writing to help them improve. They also used ICT to present their finished work well.

Mathematics

In the nursery class, children were beginning to use a range of shapes and were being introduced to numbers during their play activities. The overall quality of attainment in mathematics in the primary class was very good. Pupils had made a very good start to developing their knowledge and understanding and were making very good progress. They had conducted a range of surveys in information handling, and had a good understanding of coordinates. Daily mental mathematics practice was used very effectively to encourage pupils to think for themselves and calculate quickly. Pupils were developing a good

understanding of a range of numbers and, at P3, had made a good start to using multiplication tables. Pupils recognised and could identify a range of two-dimensional shapes, and by P3 had a good knowledge of three-dimensional shapes and their properties. Pupils were involved in regular problem solving activities, and at P3 used their knowledge of mathematics to tackle problems effectively.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school met the learning needs of the pupils very well. In the nursery class, the staff had a very good knowledge of children and used the information appropriately to plan for children's learning. Staff in the primary classes also had a very good knowledge of pupils and used it well to meet pupils' needs. They built effectively upon pupils' prior learning to ensure that pupils made appropriate progress. Tasks and activities were very well chosen to involve all pupils, and to ensure that pupils at P3 were sufficiently challenged. The teacher in the primary class used very effective assessment and marking strategies to show pupils how to improve. Pupils were involved in setting their own targets for improvement and this was having a positive effect on, for example, the quality of writing. The system of assessment, however, would be improved if the teacher met with teachers in other schools to moderate their assessments.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	The overall quality of pastoral care was good. Staff showed a very clear concern for the care and welfare of pupils, and took account of their social and emotional needs. They emphasised the need for good behaviour, and pupils responded appropriately. There were no reported incidents of bullying and pupils took care of one another. Not all staff had been trained in child protection procedures. Nursery pupils were very well involved in the life of the whole school and joined the primary class daily. Although there was a very good induction programme for children entering the nursery, there was not an equivalent programme for parents of pupils entering P1.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The overall quality of the accommodation was adequate. Classrooms were spacious, and staff had created stimulating learning environments to encourage pupils to give of their best. Staff used display and photographs very effectively to showcase the activities and work of pupils. The displays in the corridor areas and reception hall were attractive and provided parents with a good overview of much of the work of the school. Security arrangements were effective, and there was suitable access for those with physical disabilities. There was no large indoor area for physical education. Although the school had reported safety concerns about the temperature of the water, the authority had not acted quickly enough to remedy the situation. Large parts of the outdoor area were inaccessible for pupils, and there was no secure outdoor play area for nursery children.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The climate in both the nursery and primary classes was excellent. Relationships between staff and pupils were very good and built upon mutual respect. Parents, pupils and staff were proud of the school, and enjoyed being involved in it. The school was extremely welcoming to everyone, and pupils' behaviour was very good. Pupils worked and played very well together, and primary pupils acted as 'buddies' to nursery children. Staff were very supportive of one another, and the visiting nursery coordinator teacher provided very effective support for the nursery assistant. Pupils at P3 had responsibility for evaluating healthy packed lunches. Religious observance took place weekly, and the school was well supported by a local minister. The full time teacher had very high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. She set clear standards and expected pupils to achieve these. She used a reward system very effectively to encourage pupils to achieve well and pupils responded very positively. She used praise very well, but also made it clear when pupils did not achieve the expected standards. The school was very inclusive and welcomed all families and their children. Staff focused on developing positive attitudes to others, and celebrated the different backgrounds of pupils. Issues of tolerance and diversity were addressed from the very early stages.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	Links with parents and the wider community were very good. Members of the community and parents supported the school very effectively. Parents had regular contact with the nursery assistant and teacher, which was very helpful in helping staff meet pupils' needs. The school provided very informative newsletters for the wider community and helpful reports to parents on their children's progress. Meetings to discuss children's progress were very well attended. A Parent Council had recently been formed and was in the process of extending its membership. Liaison between the nursery class and the primary teacher was very good, with staff and pupils benefiting from daily links. The school was well supported by external agencies, and by staff in neighbouring schools.

7. Leading and improving the school

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

Altnaharra Primary School provided a very high quality of education for children in the nursery and pupils in the primary class. The quality of teaching and interaction with children and pupils were very good, and pupils were highly motivated to learn. Staff met the needs of pupils very effectively, and levels of attainment in English language and mathematics were very good. Relationships between adults and pupils were excellent, and the school was very well supported by parents and the wider community. The school had shown that, as a consequence of the commitment of the nursery assistant and teacher it had the capacity to maintain high standards and improve further.

The headteacher had the support of staff and parents. As a consequence of their efforts the school was now a stimulating environment for learning. The headteacher, however, was only in the school on one day each week. This resulted in too great a responsibility being placed on the very willing and cooperative class teacher and nursery assistant. The headteacher had implemented a system of evaluation of provision. She discussed forward plans, reviewed pupils' work and also visited the nursery and primary classes on a regular basis. She had not yet, however, fully implemented a rigorous system of monitoring in the nursery as required by a previous inspection. Nursery staff were aware of the implications of the Scottish Social Services Council's Codes of Practice.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the nursery class there was one recommendation which has been partly met.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve aspects of leadership and management. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- review the overall leadership and management arrangements in the school;
- improve the monitoring in the nursery by the headteacher;
- ensure all staff are trained in child protection; and
- address the safety issues identified by this inspection

What happens next?

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 parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Dr Roddy Duncan
HM Inspector

11 March 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?	
Structure of the curriculum	good
The teaching process	very good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	very good

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

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

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	weak
Self-evaluation	adequate

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

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.

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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.

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**Farr High School
Bettyhill
By Thurso
The Highland Council
3 November 2009**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects schools in order to let parents¹, young people and the local community know whether their school provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with school staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the headteacher and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities which young people are involved in. We also gather the views of young people, parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well young people are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and young people work together and how they go about improving the school. We also comment on how well the school works with other groups in the community, including services which support young people. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the school, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from young people, parents and staff, and details about young people's examination performance. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the school and a report on the learning community surrounding the school.

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

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7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?
8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
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1. The school

Farr High School is a non-denominational school which serves the parishes of Tongue and Farr in North Sutherland. The roll was 93 when the inspection was carried out in September 2009. Young people's attendance was above the national average in 2007/2008.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The range and quality of young people's achievements.
- The inclusive approach to supporting the learning of those with additional support needs.

3. Example of Good Practice

- The impact of the successful Young Enterprise group in developing young people's confidence and business and communication skills.

4. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Most young people enjoy learning and think that the school helps to make them more confident and achieve success in a range of areas. In the majority of lessons, particularly in mathematics, young people work well together. They respond very positively when they receive constructive feedback on their strengths and helpful advice on how to perform better, for example, in English. This good practice is not yet a consistent feature of young people's experiences across the school. The school has begun to help young people take more responsibility for their own achievement through setting targets with them. All staff now need to help young people to understand what they need to do to improve their learning and reach their targets. In too many lessons the work does not engage young people sufficiently. As a result, not all make enough progress.

Almost all young people are developing skills and confidence through sporting, cultural and music activities. In particular, those in the highly successful enterprise group demonstrate well-developed business and communication skills. Several successful musicians represent the school in national and provincial Mods, choirs and orchestras. The popular shinty club is successfully involving the wider community in the sport. Staff now need to monitor young people's achievements more carefully to ensure that they are developing skills in a broad range of areas.

At S1 and S2, most young people achieve appropriate standards and are making progress from prior levels of attainment in English, mathematics and other subjects. Almost all young people achieve five or more awards at General level or better, with more than a third achieving Credit awards. In recent years, most young people presented at Higher have achieved success. Pupils need to build on their success at Standard Grade to ensure that they achieve the best they can at Higher. Young people with additional support needs are making appropriate progress in their learning. The school is effective at ensuring that almost all young people leaving school enter employment or further or higher education.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

Young people at S1 and S2 study a suitably broad range of subjects, including information and communications technology (ICT). They can gain a national qualification in ICT by the end of S2. All young people at S3 and S4 study a course of up to nine Standard Grades designed to develop their skills for life and work. A number of weaknesses in their learning experiences prevent them from building effectively on the skills and qualities they already have. Staff make changes to the subject choices available from year to year to meet young people's needs and interests. Young people with particular needs follow a curriculum designed to help them achieve success. In addition to Intermediate or Higher courses at S5 and S6, young people can follow distance-learning courses to study subjects not available in school.

Young people do not always receive the support they need to achieve success in these courses. In a few subjects, there are no courses available for pupils to progress to at the next stage in their studies. At all stages, young people benefit from opportunities to learn through fieldwork, educational trips, work experience and outdoor education. Staff are beginning to consider how to improve the curriculum in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*. For example, they aim to build more effectively on young people's prior learning in numeracy when they move from P7 to S1. Young people are improving their literacy skills through an innovative media studies project in the English department. The school does not yet provide young people with two hours of good quality physical education each week.

In a majority of subjects, but not all, teachers plan activities which are relevant to young people and build on their prior learning. In most senior classes, young people get good support from one another as well as from the teacher. In other subjects, there is scope for teachers to plan activities which build better on what young people already know. Too often, they set young people tasks such as textbook exercises or worksheets, which are too easy or not stimulating enough. As a result, higher-attaining pupils in particular do not always make appropriate progress. The school meets the learning needs of young people who need additional support very well. Almost all staff are skilful at identifying and understanding those needs, and sharing key information. Support staff provide effective help for individual young people in classes.

5. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?

Staff work very effectively with a number of community partners and other agencies to enhance young people's learning. The local media help the school to share its work with the local community and celebrate young people's achievements. Overall, parents value the opportunities for achievement and learning that the school provides. They are not yet fully involved in supporting their children's learning.

Members of the new Parent Council are enthusiastic about involving parents more effectively in supporting the school's work. A range of supportive health partners help staff plan courses and there is scope for staff to involve them even more in this process. Young people leaving school are well supported by the school's links with Careers Scotland. Partnerships with local companies broaden the range of modern apprenticeship opportunities available to young people.

6. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff have recently begun to work in faculty groups planning improvements to the school's work. Recently, a few staff have begun to analyse young people's achievement carefully and listen to their views about their learning. Where this has been most effective, it has led to improvement in young people's learning. Senior managers have not ensured that teachers' continuing professional development has always been supported effectively. They are not giving a strong enough lead in ensuring that the whole school evaluates and improves the quality of its own work. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching is not of a consistently high standard across the school. Staff need to take better account of parents' views when planning improvements. Young people value the opportunity that a few teachers give them to provide feedback on their learning. They say that they would like to have more influence in improving the school through having more real responsibility.

7. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

Almost all staff support young people and work well with them to resolve issues. Most young people appreciate the school's arrangements for keeping them safe and say that any concerns they report are addressed promptly by staff. Older buddies help young people at S1 to settle in to the school. Overall, staff have appropriately high expectations of what young people can achieve. Staff

expectations of the standard of work in day-to-day lessons are not always high enough. Staff have given effective attention to helping young people to understand the needs of others, particularly those who need assistance with aspects of learning, communication or mobility. As a result, almost all young people look after one another well. There is scope for the school to do more to develop young people's understanding of issues of equality and diversity in the wider society. There are insufficient opportunities for religious observance.

8. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The headteacher has established very positive relationships with the local community. The depute headteacher and the three principal teachers support the headteacher effectively in the day-to-day running of the school. The headteacher needs to provide a stronger lead in ensuring consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the school. All senior managers now need to focus on developing the curriculum, improving young people's learning experiences and meeting their learning needs more effectively.

9. What happens next?

We are confident that, with support from the education authority, the school will be able to make the necessary improvements in light of the inspection findings. As a result, we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority will inform parents about the school's progress in improving the quality of education. Our District Inspector will maintain contact with the education authority to monitor improvements in leadership for learning and the arrangements for evaluating the school's provision.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the school and education authority.

- Ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for all young people.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum.
- Involve the whole school community in evaluating the school's work so that good practice is identified and shared, and action taken to bring about improvement where necessary.
- Improve the effectiveness of senior management.

Quality indicators help schools, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *How good is our school?* Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish schools are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Farr High School.

Improvements in performance	good
Learners' experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the school.

The curriculum	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

Managing Inspector: Jacqueline Sinclair

3 November 2009

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

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

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Appendix J.

**Golspie High School
The Highland Council
10 June 2008**

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1. Background

Golspie High School was inspected in February and March 2008 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated how well the school was raising achievement for all pupils, taking into account the extent to which pupils' learning needs were met by the curriculum and teaching. They analysed pupils' achievement in national examinations (see Appendix 3) and other areas, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. HM Inspectors focused particularly on English, mathematics, geography, and religious and moral education. The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

HM Inspectors observed teaching, learning and achievement in lessons and other contexts and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires¹ issued to a sample of parents² and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils, including representatives of pupil councils, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council and a group of parents.

Golspie High School is a non-denominational school serving the village of Golspie and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 327. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The joint working with other agencies in the Golspie area.
- The commitment of staff to providing a wide range of out-of-school hours activities for pupils.
- The quality of learners' experiences in creative and aesthetic subjects.

3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?

To evaluate how well the school was raising achievement for all, HM Inspectors considered the extent to which the learning needs of all pupils were met through the curriculum and teaching. They evaluated the impact of the school on the learning and personal development of all pupils in lessons and in other, broader contexts. They also considered pupils'

¹ See Appendix 2

² Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

achievement in examinations and other areas, and the school's overall success in sustaining improvements in performance.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum was good. The school had a clear rationale which had led to well-considered changes. Staff ensured that the curriculum took appropriate account of distinctive features of the school's location and the need to provide pupils with the necessary skills to work in the local economy. Particular features of the curriculum included the following.

- A course in information and communications technology (ICT) helped S1 pupils develop skills to support their learning in other curricular areas.
- S1 and S2 pupils developed enterprising attitudes and an understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Overall, there were insufficient curricular links with associated primary schools to ensure that pupils had continuity and progression in their learning.
- The school provided a range of vocational options at S3, S4 and S5 designed to develop pupils' skills for work. These included well-planned courses offered in partnership with Inverness College and North Highland College.
- A commendably wide range of courses was on offer in the senior school to prepare pupils for their future lives. Courses included distance learning opportunities with Telford College, Highland Council Open Learning and a range of Advanced Higher courses.
- Pupils at S1, S2 and S4 had two hours of core physical education per week, but less than this at S3, S5 and S6.
- Teachers made innovative use of the school grounds and surrounding area to increase pupils' understanding of rural and environmental issues.
- The contribution of the librarian to personal and social education classes helped pupils to be well prepared for their future careers.
- The school had not consulted with parents and pupils sufficiently well on changes to the curriculum.
- The school's personal and social education programme was under review. A number of important topics were not given sufficient attention, including safe use of the Internet.

Teaching and meeting learning needs

Overall, the quality of teaching was adequate although this varied across the school, with a few examples of very good teaching. Most teachers had created a positive classroom ethos and gave clear instructions and explanations. A few shared the purposes of lessons with pupils but this was not yet consistent in all lessons. There were some good examples of effective questioning. Too often, teachers took too strong a lead in lessons and pupils did not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. A few departments used ICT effectively to motivate pupils. A few teachers regularly discussed their learning and progress with individual pupils. They provided useful feedback to help pupils improve their work. The quality of feedback to pupils varied from weak to very good across the school. In most classes, homework tasks were not well planned and did not sufficiently challenge pupils.

The school's arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were weak. In a few lessons activities were varied and well managed, and enabled all pupils, including those with additional support needs, to make appropriate progress in their learning. Support for learning staff gathered useful information from associated primary schools which enabled them to identify pupils' learning needs and share this information promptly with teaching staff. A few pupils benefited from following flexible curriculum arrangements. A few departments organised classes effectively according to pupils' prior attainment, to provide additional support to lower-attaining groups of pupils. Class teachers did not always recognise their particular responsibilities towards meeting the learning needs of individual pupils. In most lessons, tasks set were often too easy for the majority of pupils or too difficult for the least able pupils. The school had good arrangements in place for pupils with additional support needs, when they transferred from primary school. Support for learning staff provided appropriate help for pupils undertaking Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) tasks. They developed appropriate individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for those pupils who required them. Teachers, pupils and parents were not sufficiently involved in setting the targets within these IEPs. Most teachers provided appropriate support to meet the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. A few higher-attaining pupils at S3/S4 were undertaking courses which did not provide sufficient challenge. The work of pastoral care teachers did not consistently focus on ensuring that the learning needs of all pupils were met. Overall, approaches to meeting pupils' needs were not well planned and staff across the school did not share a clear understanding of their responsibilities for meeting pupils' needs. As a result the school did not always meet the needs of pupils effectively.

Impact on learners

This section provides an evaluation of the extent to which the school was successful in raising achievement for all pupils. It refers to pupils' learning experiences, personal development and aspects of their achievement in examinations and other areas.

Learners' experiences and personal development

The quality of pupils' experiences was adequate. In most lessons, pupils were engaged in their learning and cooperated well with their teachers. They responded enthusiastically when they were given opportunities to learn independently. The library provided a welcoming environment for study and pupils made good use of the facilities for Internet research. Pupils had insufficient opportunities to be involved in decisions about their learning. The school

had introduced an effective system of target setting for pupils in S4 and there were plans to extend this to other year groups. Pupils were not sufficiently aware of their progress or strengths as learners. They often had low expectations of their achievements. Around a fifth of pupils did not like being at the school.

The school provided pupils with a very good range of opportunities for personal development. Pupils following courses in hospitality were developing their confidence and skills by providing catering for a number of events attended by members of the local community. Other pupils achieved success in local and national competitions, such as the UK Schools' Film Award. Most pupils were increasing their awareness of environmental issues through the school's successful partnership with the Golspie Recycling and Environmental Action Network garden and recycling projects. The rural skills class gained valuable experience of the world of work through links with local employers. Large numbers of pupils were increasing their skills and sharing their talents with others through musical activities, including the pipe band and orchestra. These pupils gave regular performances in the community, which helped to develop their confidence. Senior pupils were developing their leadership skills and contributing to the development of younger pupils' talents through the Sports Leadership Award scheme. The extensive range of sports clubs was well attended. Pupils were learning to challenge themselves, work in teams and support each other through activities such as mountain biking. Individual pupils achieved success at national and international levels in athletics, golf, cross-country running and football. A small number of pupils had contributed to improving the school environment through making and refitting benches and engaging in a mural project. The pupil council had recently become more active. Thirteen pupils were working successfully towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils exhibited artwork locally and two had created artwork for a local environmental garden. S6 pupils acted as "buddies" for S1 pupils but there were few opportunities for pupils in other year groups to develop as leaders or to gain experience of taking on roles of responsibility within the school.

English

Overall, in English, the quality of teaching for effective learning, arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs and learners' experiences were weak. Performance had declined, overall.

Pupils responded positively and made good progress when teachers explained what they would learn and the skills they would develop. Effective open questions helped pupils to explore issues, for example in texts they were studying, and to express and justify their opinions confidently. Teachers did not use these effective practices consistently. Overall, teachers had not created a sufficiently strong climate for learning which stimulated and celebrated the effective use of language. Working closely with the librarian, teachers encouraged pupils to develop good reading habits and research skills. Well-targeted help from support for learning staff and a classroom assistant helped pupils with additional needs to make good progress. Overall, pupils did not have enough opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and to show initiative. They were beginning to evaluate their own and each other's work and to offer constructive advice on how to improve.

Overall, pupils had made variable progress from their prior levels of attainment. The majority of pupils attained national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing by the end of S2. Those pupils who had not attained national levels made good or very good

progress in their coursework. In 2007, all pupils attained a General or Credit award at Standard Grade. The proportions of pupils attaining A-C grades at Intermediate 2 and Higher remained well below national averages and too many pupils failed to gain awards. New resources, the introduction of media study and more challenging activities for higher-achieving pupils were beginning to improve learners' experiences, meet needs better and raise attainment. Pupils responded well to opportunities to use their language skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example reading for research and making presentations.

Mathematics

Overall, in mathematics, the quality of teaching, arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs and learners' experiences were adequate. Performance had declined, overall.

Teachers gave clear explanations and generally sustained pupils' motivation through well-paced lessons. They explained clearly to pupils what they were going to learn, and recapped main points well at the end of lessons. At times, they used ICT very well to enhance pupils' learning, and used questioning techniques very effectively to assess pupils' understanding and develop their reasoning skills. In a few lessons pupils enjoyed practical work or work in groups. This good practice needed to be more consistent across classes. Pupils were increasingly being helped to evaluate their own learning. Teachers did not monitor pupils' progress rigorously enough or provide clear enough feedback on how to improve. They matched tasks well to pupils' learning needs. Teachers and learning support specialists gave effective support to individual pupils to help them to improve their work. They also provided a range of tasks to meet the needs of all pupils within classes. A number of pupils benefited from entering and gaining success in national mathematics competitions.

Attainment by the end of S2 had dipped over the past two years. Less than half of pupils attained national levels in 2007. At S3/S4, pupils consistently performed less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. At S5/S6, the proportion of pupils presented at Higher level was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion attaining A-C grades was too variable. The proportion attaining A-C grades at Intermediate 2 level was below or well below the national average. Only around half of the small numbers presented at Intermediate 1 or Advanced Higher attained A-C grades.

Geography

Overall, in geography, the quality of teaching and learners' experiences was good. Arrangements for meeting pupils' needs were adequate. Performance had improved.

Teachers gave clear explanations and made very good use of questioning to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. They shared the purpose of most lessons with pupils and provided them with helpful feedback and advice on how to improve. Teachers used ICT and audio visual materials appropriately. They planned activities to build on prior learning and adjusted some tasks to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers were beginning to make good use of real life contexts in their teaching. Pupils responded enthusiastically to a brisk pace of learning, and when they had the opportunity to work together on research tasks and practical activities. Homework tasks which were carefully linked to coursework helped pupils to develop their skills in independent learning. Staff carefully linked fieldwork activities to develop pupils' investigative skills and increase their understanding of coursework.

At S1/S2, pupils were making good progress in their coursework. They had good recall of prior learning and demonstrated a clear understanding of key geographical concepts. At S3/S4, performance was regularly above and well above the national average. In most years, at S5/S6, the proportion of pupils attaining A-C grades at Higher was above or in line with the national average. The number of pupils studying Intermediate 2 was low but all pupils had performed successfully.

Religious and moral education

Overall, in religious and moral education the quality of teaching and learners' experiences was adequate. Arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were weak. Performance had not improved.

Teachers used an appropriate range of approaches. These approaches included some effective use of ICT to motivate pupils and increase their knowledge and understanding of relevant religious and moral issues. Teachers communicated instructions clearly but they did not explain new ideas plainly enough to enable pupils to understand. Tasks and activities did not match pupils' needs well, particularly those pupils with additional support needs. Across all stages, pupils were not aware of their progress in religious and moral education (RME) or how to improve their achievements. Feedback to pupils was not sufficiently focused on helping them to make progress in their learning. Teachers encouraged pupils to take responsibility for their own learning but this was not always effective. Most pupils were well behaved and attentive, and contributed to lessons by asking appropriate questions. They had well-planned opportunities to experience learning in contexts outside the classroom, which they found motivating.

The majority of pupils in S1 and S2 were making adequate progress with their coursework. Most pupils at S3/S4 were confident in expressing their opinions and were improving their knowledge and understanding of contemporary moral issues. Across all stages pupils were not developing sufficient knowledge of beliefs, values and traditions in the major world religions, including Christianity.

Achievement in national assessments, examinations and other areas

Information about the subjects inspected has been given earlier in the report. Across the school, particular features of pupils' progress, results in examinations and other qualifications, including those awarded by the SQA within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)³ for the three year period 2005-2007, are included below.

Particular features of achievement in national assessments and other areas by the end of S2 included the following.

³ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

- By the end of S2, performance showed few signs of improvement. Pupils who were at risk of missing out on education were making good progress.
- Over the last three years the majority of pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Last session there had been a sharp decline in performance in all three areas.
- In general, pupils' progress from their prior levels of learning was too slow.

Particular features of achievement in examinations and other areas by the end of S4 included the following.

- By the end of S4, there were limited improvements in performance.
- The proportions of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF level 3 and level 4 were in line with national averages but below national averages at SCQF level 5. School performance was better than that in similar schools for SCQF levels 3 and 4 but had fallen at SCQF level 5 and was notably worse than that in similar schools.
- The proportions of pupils attaining Credit awards were well above the national averages in administration and business management and well below in computing studies, craft and design, graphic communication, and physics.
- Pupils performed notably better in administration, history and music and notably less well in computing studies and English than in their other subjects.

Particular features of achievement in examinations and other areas by the end of S6 included the following.

- By the end of S6, performance had improved.
- At S5 and at S6, the proportions of pupils attaining one or more, three or more or five or more awards at SCQF level 6 were overall in line with the national averages. Overall, the school performed in line with similar schools.
- At S6, the proportion of pupils attaining one or more awards at SCQF level 7 fluctuated greatly but was generally below the national average. Performance at this level was notably lower than that in schools with similar characteristics.

Across the school, pupils achieved in a range of experiences. Those pupils participating in the rural skills course grew a range of vegetables and developed their entrepreneurial skills by selling them to staff and the community. Most pupils had a good understanding about global citizenship through participation in activities such as a Fairtrade café and fashion show. Levels of pupil exclusions were low. The percentages of pupils leaving for higher education and employment were increasing.

4. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	<p>There were important weaknesses in the school's approaches to pupils' care, welfare and development. Teaching staff were vigilant to changes in pupils' attitude and behaviour. Through close work with the associated primary schools pupils were well prepared socially for life in secondary school. Office staff operated efficient procedures to identify pupils whose attendance was a cause for concern. The "drop-zone" facility for pupils to discuss any problems and joint agency meetings enabled specialists to work effectively with the most vulnerable pupils. The school promoted healthy lifestyles for pupils well. School staff had made significant improvements to the lunchtime service and managed to increase uptake of meals. Pupils' work experience logs demonstrated a good understanding of their developing skills for work. The school monitored pupils' care, welfare and development through regular updates from class teachers. While pupils at S1 knew whom to approach if they had a problem, at other stages pastoral care procedures were not satisfactory. Too many pupils did not know who their pastoral teacher was and a significant number of pupils had not had contact with a pastoral teacher in the past year. Pastoral records were not maintained efficiently. A lack of clarity about the responsibilities of pastoral teachers and senior managers had resulted in confusion about who was responsible for some pupils. Not all pastoral teachers were using effective systems to record regular contacts with pupils and help them to reflect on their learning. The quality of support pupils received with important pastoral matters varied widely. As a result, the school's approaches to supporting pupils were weak.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Management and use of resources and space for learning	<p>The management and use of resources and space for learning were adequate overall. Particular features included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high quality displays at the entrance to the school and in the main corridor made visitors feel welcome and promoted pupils' achievements. • Good use was made of the local environment including a new mountain bike course and the local environmental garden. • The library was a lively and stimulating learning environment. • Technology rooms offered very high quality accommodation for pupils. • Security arrangements were not sufficiently robust. • In a few areas, water ingress onto electrical equipment was causing health and safety concerns. • The school had too many outdated textbooks and too much of the equipment was in a poor state of repair.

Aspect	Comment
Equalities, expectations and engagement	<p>Most staff were motivated and gave willingly of their time to support a wide range of study support and school events. A few staff did not feel valued by the headteacher. The school had developed some effective strategies to celebrate pupils' achievements. Across the school, pupils' achievements were celebrated at year assemblies and through an electronic notice board. Most teachers used praise well to motivate pupils. Teachers' expectations about pupils' attendance, behaviour and effort varied widely. When teachers set high standards, pupils responded with high expectations of themselves. Target setting was not used effectively to help pupils raise their expectations. The school was beginning to record pupils' wider achievements but this information was not used to help pupils to develop as individuals. The school worked with a range of partner agencies to ensure pupils at risk of missing out on education were treated equally and fairly. Fundraising activities, including Children in Need activities and the annual sponsored walk, developed teamwork and a sense of pride amongst pupils and staff. A few staff did not promote a strong sense of equality and fairness in their dealings with pupils. The school did not offer pupils sufficient opportunities for religious observance. The headteacher worked hard to promote the values of the school but he was not always effectively supported in this by all staff.</p>
The school's success in involving parents	<p>The school was increasingly aware of the important role parents, carers and families could play in improving the school. The Parent Council both supported and challenged the headteacher and was active in improving aspects of the school. Events organised by the school were well attended. Parents had made suggestions for improvements through a committee looking at homework. Most parents were happy with the way their concerns were dealt with. Parents had significant concerns about the quality of education in some departments of the school. Just over a half of parents surveyed thought the school had a good reputation in the community. About a half would like clearer information about the school's priorities for improving the education of pupils.</p>

5. Leading and improving the school

Golspie High School lacked clear leadership and commitment by all staff to improving the quality of education for, and raising the achievement of all pupils. Pupils benefited from a good range of opportunities to excel in sporting, cultural and community activities. Most pupils were well behaved, confident and responsible in their actions. A few pupils showed little pride in the school. Pupils were keen to have a greater say in improving the school. Partnership agencies thought highly of the school and its commitment to pupils at risk of

missing out on education. Not all staff worked with the senior management team to ensure the new management structures were successful in driving forward school improvements. Some pastoral staff still needed to develop the necessary skills to ensure the care and welfare of pupils. Overall, the school required significant support from the education authority in order to improve.

The headteacher was highly motivated and committed to the staff, pupils and parents of Golspie High School. Staff appreciated the fact that he consulted them and gave them plenty of time to implement developments. However, this resulted in a slow pace of change and improvement. The headteacher did not hold staff sufficiently accountable when improvements were taken forward too slowly. Senior management team (SMT) and extended board of studies meetings focused too much on routine business rather than strategic decisions which would lead to change. The depute headteachers had insufficient opportunity to take strategic responsibility for areas of the school's work. Principal teachers supported their departments well but did not consistently challenge them to improve. The headteacher was committed to developing leadership capacity and building effective partnerships and there were several examples of effective partnership working. Almost all teachers were members of working groups. The remits of these groups needed to be clearer, and include specific and timed targets for action.

The school did not review its work and performance effectively. The measures taken to identify strengths, areas for improvement and strategies for change had had only limited impact on the quality of the school's work. The headteacher and SMT were developing new approaches to self-evaluation. They reviewed attainment and had commissioned a survey of parents' and pupils' views on the quality of education. They did not visit lessons to evaluate the learning experiences of all pupils. There was inconsistency in the extent to which principal teachers reviewed the work of departments and supported the SMT in improving pupils' experiences and achievement. Improvement planning was too complex and slow to impact. It needed to be more clearly linked to improvements in teaching and in the learning and achievements of all pupils.

As well as building on the strengths and addressing the issues raised throughout this report, the school and the education authority should address the following main points for action.

Main points for action

Continue to raise achievement by:

- evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences at all stages;
- monitoring arrangements for the care, welfare and development of pupils to ensure they are consistently applied and effective;
- more rigorous monitoring and tracking of achievement to identify where improvements are needed; and
- improving the effectiveness of leadership at all levels.

What happens next?

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. HM Inspectors will engage with the school and the education authority to monitor progress. They will publish an interim report on progress within one year of the publication of this report. Thereafter, HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in a report to parents, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

David Gregory
HM Inspector

10 June 2008

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The following quality indicators have been used in the inspection process to contribute to the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school in raising achievement for all pupils.

Section 3. How well does the school raise achievement for all?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	adequate
Meeting learning needs	weak
Learners' experiences	adequate
Improvements in performance: S1/S2	weak
Improvements in performance: S3/S4	adequate
Improvements in performance: S5/S6	adequate

Section 4. How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	weak
Management and use of resources and space for learning	adequate
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	adequate
Expectations and promoting achievement	adequate
Equality and fairness	adequate
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	adequate

Section 5. Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	weak
Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	weak
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

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

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

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

The following provides a summary of questionnaire responses. Key issues from the questionnaires have been considered in the inspection and comments are included as appropriate throughout the report.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<p>Around a quarter of parents responded to the questionnaire. They were positive about a number of aspects of the work of the school.</p> <p>In particular they thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school reports gave helpful information about children’s progress; • their children were treated fairly and staff showed care and concern for all pupils; • staff made them welcome in the school; and • parents’ evenings were helpful and informative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a third of parents thought their children did not find school work stimulating and challenging. • Just under a half of parents thought the school did not have a good reputation in the local community. • About a half of parents did not have a clear idea of the school’s priorities for improving the education of pupils. • Around a third of parents thought the school was not well led.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<p>All pupils surveyed responded to the questionnaire. They were positive about most aspects of the school, and felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability; • they felt safe and secure in the school; and • the school helped them to keep safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a fifth of pupils did not like being at the school. • About a fifth of pupils did not think that any teacher knew them well. • Just over a third of pupils thought teachers did not listen to what they said. • Just over a half of pupils felt they were treated fairly in the school.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff worked hard to maintain good relations with the local community. • Teachers provided constructive feedback to pupils on their work. • Teachers set high standards for pupils' attainment. • Staff were caring towards pupils and there was mutual respect between staff and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around a half of teachers and two thirds of support and auxiliary staff thought time for continuous professional development could be used more effectively. • Just over a half of teachers and two thirds of support and auxiliary staff thought that standards set for pupils' behaviour were not consistently upheld in the school. • Just over two fifths of teachers and a third of support and auxiliary staff thought the school was not well led.

Appendix 3 Performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

This data is used alongside evaluations of teaching for effective learning, meeting learning needs, expectations and promoting achievement, and the overall quality of learners' achievement, to inform the overall evaluation of improvements in performance.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S4

		2005	2006	2007
English and Mathematics @ Level 3	Golspie High School	93	96	94
	Comparator schools⁴	95	94	94
	National	90	91	92
5+ @ Level 3 or better	Golspie High School	96	93	98
	Comparator schools	93	94	93
	National	90	91	91
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Golspie High School	76	82	89
	Comparator schools	78	78	77
	National	76	77	76
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Golspie High School	27	34	18
	Comparator schools	32	34	30
	National	34	35	33

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S5

		2005	2006	2007
5+ @ Level 4 or better	Golspie High School	92	79	85
	Comparator schools⁴	80	82	79
	National	78	78	79
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Golspie High School	50	44	45
	Comparator schools	44	43	45
	National	45	45	46
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	45	32	34
	Comparator schools	38	37	37
	National	39	38	39
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	27	23	18
	Comparator schools	19	20	19
	National	23	22	22

5+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	11	6	8
	Comparator schools	8	7	7
	National	10	10	10

Percentage of relevant S4 roll gaining awards by end of S6

		2005	2006	2007
5+ @ Level 5 or better	Golspie High School	48	55	46
	Comparator schools⁴	45	46	45
	National	47	48	47
1+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	44	50	34
	Comparator schools	41	42	41
	National	43	43	42
3+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	25	34	32
	Comparator schools	28	26	27
	National	30	30	29
5+ @ Level 6 or better	Golspie High School	9	22	20
	Comparator schools	18	17	16
	National	19	20	19
1+ @ Level 7 or better	Golspie High School	1	14	7
	Comparator schools	13	11	10
	National	12	13	12

⁴ Comparator schools are the 20 schools statistically closest to the school being inspected in terms of the five socio-economic characteristics of the school population and surrounding areas.

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 & 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 at www.hmie.gov.uk.

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**Golspie High School
The Highland Council
28 April 2009**

We published a report on Golspie High School in June 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2009. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping young people to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find descriptions of good practice in the school and analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

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6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Golspie High School serves the village of Golspie, neighbouring villages and surrounding rural communities.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The joint working with a range of other agencies to support young people's learning.
- The range of curricular and out of class experiences available for young people at all stages.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

The school has identified a number of priorities to help it improve. As a result it has taken some promising steps to improve young people's learning and achievement. In some departments, young people are becoming more responsible for their own learning. More teachers now provide young people with stimulating and challenging learning activities. Across the school, teachers now share the purposes of learning more regularly with young people. In a few departments young people's learning experiences are still too variable and do not always match their needs. The school recognises the need to ensure that all young people enjoy consistently high quality learning experiences in every class. Young people's attainments improved in 2008 in reading, writing and mathematics at S1/S2. In 2008 young people's attainments improved at S4 but were significantly weaker at S5. Overall, young people's attainments remain too variable. The school has increased the wide range of opportunities for young people to achieve through new activities such as the community sports leader award scheme.

4. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?

Staff are very committed to young people's welfare and learning. The school has made significant improvements to the ways it provides and records pastoral support for young people. All young people are now aware of their pastoral teacher and arrangements for individual and group contacts are much better. Local groups and agencies work closely with pastoral staff to provide valuable support for groups of young people, such as the significant number of young carers. Pastoral staff have made worthwhile improvements to the personal and social education programme. Young people are not yet fully aware of Internet safety. The school has taken some early, but promising, steps to improve young people's learning and achievement through closer working with its associated primary schools. Parents now work with teachers and young people in task groups to plan improvements to learning. The school responds positively to suggestions for improvement from the active Parent Council. The school has developed its links with local colleges and community enterprises to prepare young people more effectively for the world of work. New Open University and other distance learning courses provide challenging learning experiences for young people in S5/S6.

5. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff and young people work together with parents to improve aspects of the school that include learning and teaching, homework and behaviour. Staff are committed to improving the school, although a few have yet to become fully involved beyond their own subject areas. School staff are improving the ways in which they review the quality of their work. Staff have started to observe one another's lessons, to share good practice and to provide colleagues with helpful advice. They should now do so more regularly and consistently, with a greater focus on improving young people's learning and achievement. A few teachers ask young people for their opinions in order to improve their

teaching and lessons. Young people in S5/S6 make important contributions to improving the school. They act as 'buddies' supporting young people in the junior years. The school is well placed to provide young people in S1 to S4 with more opportunities to contribute to the school and to develop as citizens.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

The school has taken some important steps to encourage young people to achieve better. Young people work more regularly with their pastoral teachers to set targets for their own learning. A few teachers' expectations of what young people can achieve are too low and arrangements for homework are too variable. The school should now ensure that all young people have realistic but challenging learning targets. Pastoral staff are more involved in setting targets with young people. Class teachers are not, as yet, sufficiently involved in the process. The school has yet to fully develop systems to monitor and record young people's progress and to use the information to plan the next steps in their learning. The school has revised its arrangements for encouraging good behaviour in classrooms and in other areas. The behaviour of a small number of pupils continues to interfere with the learning of others.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The headteacher has identified what the school needs to do to improve. Senior managers have contributed effectively to the improvements that have taken place over the past year. They have consulted widely and involved teachers, young people and parents in discussing and planning improvements in key areas. The planned improvements should now be taken forward at a more brisk pace. Almost all staff take increasing responsibility for improving the school. Most have the capacity to be involved more directly in leading teams and developments. All staff now need to work together more

consistently to take forward the developments that will lead to improved learning and greater achievement for all young people.

8. What happens next?

The school has significantly improved its arrangements for the care and welfare of young people. Young people's attainment, although still variable, has improved at several stages. The school has increased its capacity to improve through, for example, greater involvement of staff, young people and parents. Progress in meeting learners' needs and in providing young people with appropriate learning experiences remains weak. As set out in the original report of June 2008, we will carry out a further follow-through visit to the school and will report to parents, within one year of the publication of this report, on the extent of the improvement that has been achieved.

Managing Inspector: Douglas Marr
28 April 2009

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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 at www.spsso.org.uk.

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**Golspie High School
The Highland Council
23 March 2010**

We published a report on Golspie High School in June 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and main points for action. We carried out a follow-through inspection in February 2009 and published a report on that visit in April 2009.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in February 2010. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping young people to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

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7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Golspie High School serves the village of Golspie, neighbouring villages and surrounding rural communities. An acting headteacher has been in post since October 2009.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- Staff's commitment to the education and welfare of the young people in their care.
- The wide range of opportunities and activities that encourage all young people to learn and achieve.
- Strong partnerships that provide young people with effective support.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people's learning experiences are better. Young people are now more confident and more responsible for their own learning. They are clearer about what they need to do to improve. Most teachers now provide young people with more consistent and challenging activities. Young people have more opportunity to work together and to help one another to learn. As a result, they achieve more in class. Most teachers use assessment information more effectively to meet the needs of all young people, including those who require additional support. Teachers do not always plan and use homework consistently to support learning. Young people's attainment in mathematics at S1/2 has improved over the past three years, but is more variable in reading and writing. Young people's attainment at S3-S6 is variable, but was stronger at S5 in 2009. A relatively high proportion of young people at S5/6 do not obtain awards in key subjects. Young people continue to achieve well in a wide range of activities outside the classroom.

4. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?

Staff work flexibly and responsively with partner organisations to support all young people in and out of school. Teachers now work more closely with primary colleagues to help young people, including those with additional support needs, to transfer easily to the secondary school. Primary and secondary staff are now well placed to work together to further improve learning and teaching. All young people know whom to contact for advice and support. Young people and their parents are now more aware of how to keep safe when using the Internet. At all stages, young people benefit from the very effective revision of the school's personal, social and health education programmes. Young people at S3-S6 gain valuable skills and insights through work experience and work-related courses provided in partnership with colleges of further education.

5. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff, young people and parents are very committed to improving the school. Most teachers now observe one another's lessons and provide helpful advice. The school does not yet collect and share the good practice observed. Some staff still lack confidence to use examination information to plan for improvement. Almost all staff are members of groups that work to improve the school. Members of the very active Parent Council work with staff and young people in school improvement groups. Almost all young people are proud of their school and work hard to maintain and improve provision. Many of them support younger learners and make effective contributions to the community and local organisations.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

The acting headteacher has set higher standards and expectations. Almost all young people respond well and behaviour in classes is much better. More young people show pride in their school by wearing uniform. Most staff have higher expectations of young people. They work with young people to raise their achievement by setting learning targets that are shared with parents. Staff do not always provide young people with enough specific advice to help them achieve their targets. Teachers do not always make effective use of information and communications technology to help young people set targets and record their progress.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The acting headteacher provides strong and supportive leadership. He frequently consults staff, young people and parents. He successfully involves senior staff and faculty leaders in making improvements at departmental and whole school levels. Almost all staff make increasingly effective contributions to school improvement. Staff work together more effectively to improve the quality of young people's learning and achievements. Morale and confidence are much higher amongst staff, young people and parents.

8. What happens next?

The school has improved significantly under the leadership of the acting headteacher. Many of the improvements are relatively new and will take time to have significant impact on learning and achievement. We will carry out a further follow through visit to the school within one year of the publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the school has improved.

HM Inspector: Douglas Marr
23 March 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

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

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**Golspie High School
The Highland Council
3 May 2011**

We published a report on Golspie High School in June 2008. That report set out key strengths of the school and areas for improvement. We carried out follow-through inspections in February 2009 and February 2010 and published reports on those visits in April 2009 and March 2010.

This follow-through report is based on an inspection visit which was carried out in March 2011. It tells you about improvements since the original inspection in the quality of education which the school provides. It also comments on how the school is getting on with the main points for action. First we focus on changes in the core work of the school. We explain how the school has got better at helping children to learn and benefit from being at the school. Next we look at the key processes which enable this to happen, including the involvement of parents¹. Our report also describes developments in the 'ethos' of the school, by which we mean how well young people are cared for and how much is expected of them in all aspects of school life. Finally we comment on improvements in leadership to help the school achieve its aims.

A copy of this report has been placed on the HMIE website www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, you will also find analyses of questionnaire returns.

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

Contents

1. The school
2. Particular strengths of the school
3. How well do young people learn and achieve?
4. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?
5. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?
6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?
7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?
8. What happens next?

1. The school

Golspie High School serves the village of Golspie, neighbouring villages and surrounding rural communities. A new headteacher took up post in May 2010.

2. Particular strengths of the school

- The leadership and sense of direction provided by the headteacher.
- The commitment of staff to improve the quality of learning and teaching and young people's achievement.
- The positive attitude of almost all young people towards their school and their work.
- The wide range of opportunities and activities that help young people to learn and achieve.

3. How well do young people learn and achieve?

Young people's learning experiences continue to improve. Young people learn more actively and take greater responsibility for planning and reviewing their own learning. They have more opportunities to work and learn together. Young people's learning is supported through better use of homework although a few teachers still use it inconsistently. Teachers are better at identifying young people's strengths and learning needs. Teachers' work is of a more consistently high quality. Staff are much more confident in using assessment information to plan further improvement. Young people's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at S1/2 has improved significantly over the past three years. Young people's attainment at S3 to S6 continues to be variable. Young people are achieving better in key subjects, but there is considerable scope for further improvement. The school continues to provide many opportunities for young people to achieve and to contribute to the ethos and life of the school.

4. How well do staff work with others to support young people's learning?

Staff continue to work effectively with a range of partners to support young people's learning and development. They have further strengthened links with primary school colleagues to develop important aspects of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff with particular responsibility for supporting young people are much clearer about their roles. They work closely with other agencies to support young people. Their work is effectively coordinated by a deputy headteacher. Parents have more confidence in the school and about their children's learning and achievement. Parents contribute to school improvement through membership of working groups. Young people's skills for life and work are developed through partnerships with local organisations and colleges.

5. Are staff and young people actively involved in improving their school community?

Staff are clear about what is required to further improve the school. They work more collaboratively and consistently to improve the quality of learning and teaching and young people's achievement. They observe one another's lessons more regularly; make suggestions for improvement and share good practice. School managers should ensure that this is done consistently to further improve young people's learning experiences. Young people have more opportunities to contribute to improvements. More teachers ask for their opinions about courses and lessons. Young people contributed to the much improved programme for personal and social education. The pupil council is consulted regularly on a number of important developments and has a budget to support its work. Young people have more confidence and pride in their school and almost all wear school uniform.

6. Does the school have high expectations of all young people?

The headteacher has quickly established high standards and expectations. Young people in S3–S6 have been set challenging targets for learning and achievement. They are supported through a recently introduced mentoring scheme. Young people's progress and achievement is tracked and recorded more regularly and systematically through a highly promising electronic management system. There is scope to involve parents more directly in the process. Young people generally behave well in and out of class. A clear and effective system to promote positive behaviour is leading to further improvement.

7. Does the school have a clear sense of direction?

The recently appointed headteacher has continued the positive development and improvement of the school that was at an early stage last year. He has given the school a clear sense of direction and correctly identified the areas where improvement is most necessary. Senior managers, including faculty managers and principal teachers have benefited from clearer and more manageable remits. Almost all of them are now better placed to contribute to further improvement. Staff are more willing to take on leadership responsibilities and to improve the school through their membership of working groups. Others contribute strongly to aspects of Curriculum for Excellence, such as literacy and numeracy, and to staff development activities.

8. What happens next?

The school has continued to improve under the leadership of the new headteacher. Many of the improvements noted in the report of March 2010 are more secure and are making a significant impact on learning and teaching. As a result, we will make no further visits to the school in connection with the report published in June 2008. Our District Inspector will continue to engage with the education authority to monitor the school's progress with particular reference to young people's attainment.

Managing Inspector: Douglas Marr
3 May 2011

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

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

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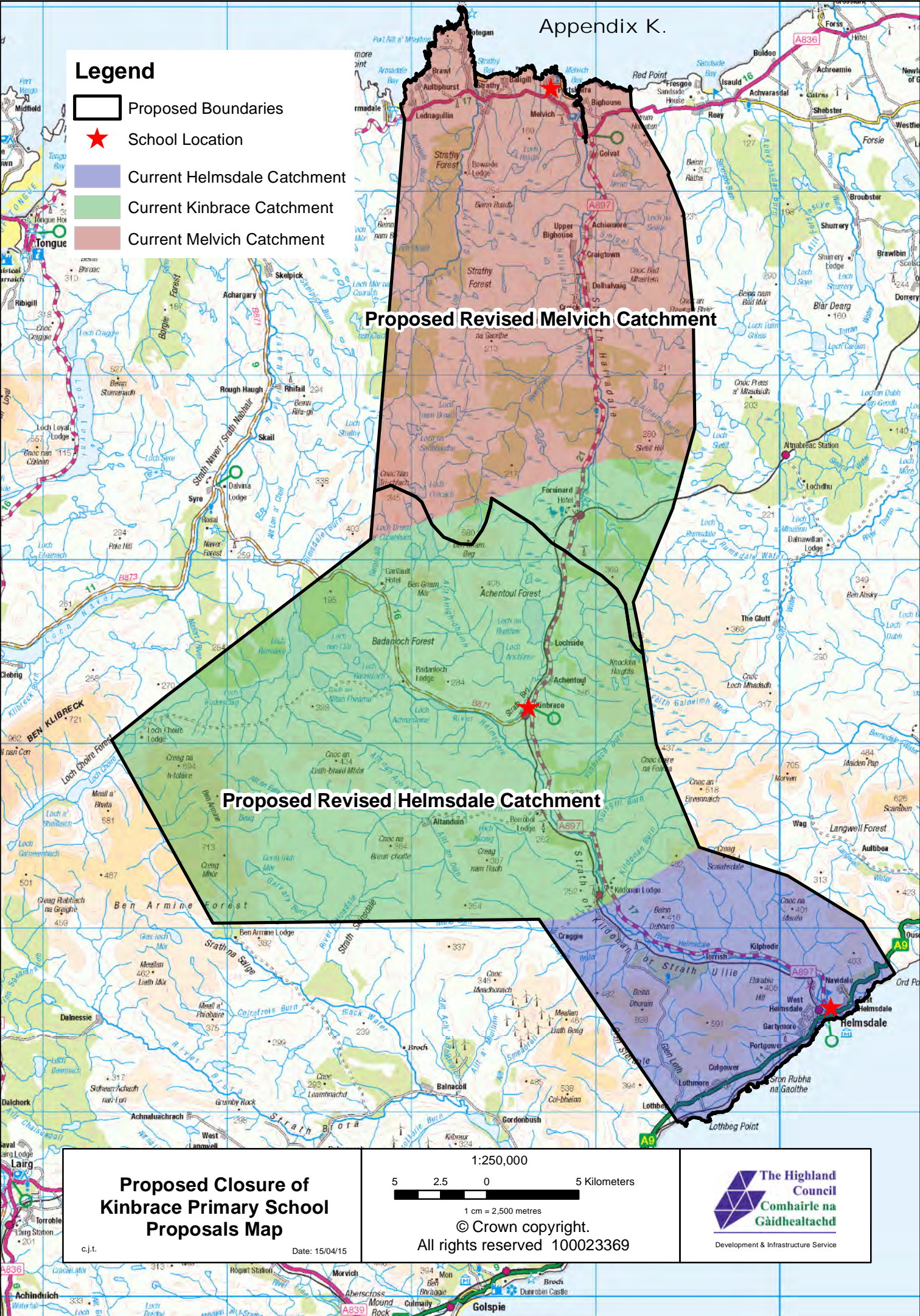
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Legend

-  Proposed Boundaries
-  School Location
-  Current Helmsdale Catchment
-  Current Kinbrace Catchment
-  Current Melvich Catchment



Proposed Revised Melvich Catchment

Proposed Revised Helmsdale Catchment

Proposed Closure of Kinbrace Primary School Proposals Map

c.j.t.

Date: 15/04/15

1:250,000



1 cm = 2,500 metres

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Development & Infrastructure Service

Appendix L.

Route	Daily Mileage	CO ₂ e (kg per day)	CO ₂ e (kg per annum)	CO ₂ (kg per day)	CO ₂ (kg per annum)	CH ₄ (kg per day)	CH ₄ (kg per annum)	N ₂ O (kg per day)	N ₂ O (kg per annum)
Badanloch - Helmsdale PS	21.7	5.134003	975.46057	5.0704437	963.384303	0.001736	0.32984	0.0618233	11.746427
Badanloch/Achentoul - Kinbrace PS	5	1.18295	224.7605	1.168305	221.97795	0.0004	0.076	0.014245	2.70655

Financial Template- Kinbrace PS closure

Table 1			
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Forecast revenue costs for Kinbrace 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	86,540		-86,540
support staff	8,515		-8,515
teaching staff training (CPD etc)			0
support staff training			0
Supply costs	2,338		-2,338
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance			0
non domestic rates			0
water & sewerage charges	196		-196
energy costs	3,760		-3,760
cleaning (contract or inhouse)			0
building repair & maintenance	132		-132
grounds maintenance			0
facilities management costs			0
revenue costs arising from capital			0
other			0
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials			0
catering (contract or inhouse)			0
SQA costs			0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	1,489		-1,489
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	25,000	14,769	-10,231
other pupil transport costs			0
staff travel			0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	127,970	14,769	-113,201
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals			0
Lets			0
External care provider			0
Other			0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	0	0	0
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	127,970	14,769	-113,201
UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	31,992	3,692	-28,300

Note: As Kinbrace 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. As the school is currently mothballed these savings are already being realised.

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	0
non domestic rates	0
water & sewerage charges	0
energy costs	0
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	0

Table 4

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

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
none	0
GAE IMPACT	

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared on a proposal:

To discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale Primary School and Melvich 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 Kinbrace Primary School, and parents of pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School and Altnaharra Primary School; Farr High School and Golspie High School;
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) The Parent Councils of Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School.
- (vi) Staff of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and of Farr and Golspie High Schools.
- (vii) Trade Union representatives;
- (viii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 2 schools;
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (x) Local Youth Convenor.

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

A public meeting will be held in Kinbrace on 22 June 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

		<p>age group, and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit 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 Kinbrace 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	Neutral	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 Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale Primary School and Melvich Primary School.

The Assessment is current prior to public consultation but may be amended in the light of comments received during the course of that consultation.

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 Kinbrace Primary School; parents of pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School, including parents of pre-school pupils;
- (ii) Pupils attending Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School and Altnaharra Primary School; Farr High School and Golspie High School;
- (iv) Members of Parliament and Members of Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal;
- (v) The Parent Councils of Helmsdale Primary School, Melvich Primary School, Altnaharra Primary School, Farr High School and Golspie High School.
- (vi) Staff of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and of Farr and Golspie High Schools.
- (vii) Trade Union representatives;
- (viii) The community councils for the areas covered by the 5 schools;
- (ix) Education Scotland;
- (x) Local Youth Convenor.

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

A public meeting will be held in Kinbrace on 22 June 2016. This meeting will be advertised in advance in the local press and on the Highland Council website.

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 2013. 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 Kinbrace to Helmsdale, a distance of 17.3 miles.

Kinbrace School was mothballed when the pupil roll fell to 1. Were Kinbrace School to re-open with 100% of catchment pupils attending the school, the roll figures for the forthcoming few years would be; 2016-17 – 4; 2017-18 – 4; 2018-19 – 5; 2019-20 - 5.

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.

At present Helmsdale Primary School has a pupil roll of less than 50% of the school's capacity. The school is comfortably able to accommodate the pupils from Inverasdale and no adverse effects for Helmsdale Primary or Melvich Primary are expected to arise. On the contrary, including the pupils from Kinbrace within the Helmsdale catchment will help to maintain a healthy roll at Helmsdale, and potentially this could also be true for Melvich Primary.

How will people in rural communities be affected?

Accessibility of service – since the “mothballing” of Kinbrace Primary School pupils of P1-7 age from the Kinbrace catchment have been provided with free school transport to Helmsdale Primary School. The “mothballing” has meant reduced accessibility of service for parents of pre-school children, who are required to transport their children to Helmsdale. There are presently 2 pre-school children within the Kinbrace catchment.

Conversely, attending the larger nursery at Helmsdale provides pre-school pupils with greater opportunities to interact with other children of their own age, and therefore with enhanced opportunities for learning through play. This is also a benefit to the children from Helmsdale, itself a rural village.

It is also recognised that pupils from Kinbrace itself have less opportunity to walk or cycle to school than when Kinbrace 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. That said, it must also be acknowledged that the Kinbrace catchment itself covers a wide area, and even if the school were open not every pupil from the catchment would have the opportunity to walk or cycle to school.

Travel time to the service – The maximum additional travel time for school pupils to Helmsdale is 28 minutes (17.1 miles) (source: Google Maps).

Cost to access the service – Parents of children aged 3 and 4 years will have additional costs if they wish to access pre-school education, in comparison to where Kinbrace Primary was re-opened.

Economic impact – when the school ceased to operate in 2013, 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 – the concentration of service in Helmsdale provides opportunities for improved partner service delivery to children, through reduced duplication of work and time spent travelling, and reduced costs. 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 KINBRACE PRIMARY SCHOOL
22 JUNE 2016

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

Panel

Drew Millar, Councillor (Chair)

Brian Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service

Barry Northedge, Area Quality Improvement Manager (North), Care and
Learning Service

Ian Jackson, Education Officer, Highland Council

9 other people attended the meeting, including 3 local councillors (Cllr. G. Phillips, Cllr. D. MacKay, Cllr. G. Farlow), the Head Teacher of Helmsdale Primary School, a class teacher from Helmsdale Primary School, and a representative of Education Scotland. There were 3 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 Kinbrace 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. He asked whether anyone present would like a copy of the papers. [Copies were then distributed]. 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. The Chairperson then asked Brian Porter, Head of Resources for Care and Learning, to describe the consultation process.

Brian 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 and Mr Northedge, 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 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 August, and the Council is looking for views to be submitted before that date. Once the public consultation ends on 24 August, 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 and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. Following the completion of that stage, the Council will take a Final Report to Committee. As part of the inclusive process, the Final Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, to allow for further representations. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Our current intention was to publish the final report in December, prior to submitting it to Committee in January 2017. Following that, the decision of the ECAS Committee has to be confirmed by the full Council, which would meet in March 2017, as a school closure decision has to be taken by the full Council. That is not however the end of the process, as the Scottish Ministers have a right of call-in for any school closures proposal, so even after the Council has made its decision there is a further period in which people can raise concerns with the Scottish Government. 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. If the decision is not called-in, the Council would then implement its proposal. It is a very slow and measured process, with multiple opportunities for review.

The Chairperson then asked Barry Northedge, Area Quality Improvement Manager, to explain the educational aspects of the proposal.

Barry Northedge said that a decision to propose a school closure was never taken lightly, and was only ever taken with the best interests of pupils in mind. The Council's contention was that with such low numbers, we cannot provide the best educational opportunities for pupils. The Curriculum for Excellence promotes principles such as pupils taking more responsibility for their learning, and peers supporting one another. Those opportunities become extremely limited with such small numbers. Team sports become impossible. The Council cannot say to any parent that pupils would get the best offer of education with such small numbers. We could say that the offer would be better at a school like Helmsdale, which has

larger numbers. We must also look beyond education and look at socialisation, the friendships that pupils make, and opportunities to play with other children. Making and breaking friendships is part of life and part of growing up, and the more difficult that becomes, the more compelling the argument becomes for children to be educated in a larger school.

The Chairperson then opened the meeting to the Q and A session.

Marie MacKenzie, a parent from within the Kinbrace catchment, asked what the new catchment area would be.

Ian Jackson commented that the proposal was to reassign almost all of the Kinbrace catchment area to the Helmsdale catchment, with the exception of the community of Forsinard, which would be reassigned to the Melvich catchment.

Mrs MacKenzie asked whether this included the area as far as Garvault and Loch Choire. Although there were currently no children at the latter location, anyone from there would have to travel 14 miles along a dirt track before even getting to a road, and from the road they would have to travel about an hour one way to get to Helmsdale.

Mr Jackson confirmed that under the current proposal Garvault and Loch Choire would transfer to the Helmsdale catchment, but that clearly the Council would consider any views submitted in response to consultation.

Roanna Grant, a parent from within the Helmsdale catchment, asked a question about the implications of re-opening Kinbrace. If a parent from within the Kinbrace catchment did not want to send their children to Kinbrace, but wanted them to stay in Helmsdale, would they be allowed to, and would they receive transport?

Mr Northedge advised that if Kinbrace PS re-opened, parents from the catchment could still request a place at Helmsdale PS, but it would be treated as a placing request and parents would be liable for the organisation and costs of transport.

There being no other comments, the Chairperson reminded those present of the closing date for responses – 24 August 2016 – 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 in January 2017, 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 Kinbrace Primary School

1. Ashley Lamond
2. Helmsdale Primary School Parent Council
3. Laura Murray
4. Morag Martin
5. Kate Morrison
6. Anne Whitehead
7. Questionnaires Helmsdale Primary School pupils P1
8. Questionnaires Helmsdale Primary School pupils P2
9. Questionnaires Helmsdale Primary School pupils P3
10. Questionnaires Helmsdale Primary School pupils P4-6
11. Questionnaires Helmsdale Primary School pupils P7
12. Alison Henderson
13. Sir John Nutting
14. Marie MacKenzie
15. Michael Wigan
16. Helmsdale Community Council – received after deadline

From:
Sent: 17 June 2016 11:53
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Kinbrace Consultation

Dear Mr Northedge

I would like to make my opinion known with regard to the proposal of discontinuing the education provision at Kinbrace Primary.

I moved to Badenloch in August 2015, this obviously puts my children in the catchment for Kinbrace PS. On moving my original feeling was that I would like to see the school re-open as I was apprehensive about the distance to Helmsdale PS. My eldest child has been attending Helmsdale since August and travels every day via school car. The travelling has not had any effect on him, which was my biggest concern as it obviously made quite a long school day. I was concerned that in the winter that the school transport would not run and am happy to say that there was only a couple of days where it wasn't viable to run and I wouldn't have been happy to send him to school anyway, even if it had only been to Kinbrace.

I would now **not like** to see Kinbrace PS reopen. This is for a number of reason;

- My eldest child has settled into Helmsdale PS and is now flourishing. The teaching staff at Helmsdale PS have worked hard with [redacted] and I can't believe the difference in him. [redacted] loves Helmsdale PS and has made so many new friends, I feel that moving him into a small school like Kinbrace would be detrimental to him, not only socially but educationally as well.
- With a projected roll of 5 pupils by 2019, I can't see how any of the children would benefit socially or even on sporting front with so few kids.
- The children would not even have a school canteen, which may be a minor point but is important to me
- My youngest child would be the only child in nursery. I have only recently settled him in Helmsdale and I don't believe he would cope having to change and certainly not if he was there on his own. There would be no social interactive, he wouldn't learn how to play with his peers and I don't think he would enjoy the same range of activities that he does at the moment with [redacted] and [redacted] in Helmsdale.

- Looking at the financial document in the consultation, I can't believe that the Highland Council could sustain paying for a school to re-open at a cost of almost £32000 per child per year. This money could be better invested else where on education.
- Both schools lose out as they do not have a Head Teacher on site every day and I would think it would be difficult for the head teacher to balance time between both schools
- My children would be together 24/7, in the same classroom, playground and home environment. I don't think this would work in their favour.
- Potentially my children would only ever have one teacher for the remainder of their primary education.
- Potentially they would not benefit from visiting specialist teachers or be offered music tuition, which is available at Helmsdale PS.

All in all I don't see that my children would have the same opportunities if they had to attend Kinbrace PS. If it comes to it, I plan to submit a Placing Request for my children to continue to attend Helmsdale Primary School, so perhaps they should not be included in the projected roll numbers for Kinbrace Primary?

I would happy to talk to you if needed.

Regards

Good morning Barry

We held a Parent Council Meeting yesterday, 21st June. This was to go over the consultation papers for the proposed closure of Kinbrace Primary. It was unanimous that everyone was behind the proposal, although I would like to make it clear that not every family was represented at this meeting or had put in feedback separately if they could not attend. The following points were made.

- FINANCE
 - The cost per head to educate a child seemed ludicrous in the current financial climate
 - Are funds ring fenced for Kinbrace to reopen or would the council have to make further savings?
 - PSA and cleaning time across Highland have been cut, could this lead to further cuts
- STAFFING
 - How would the Head Teacher split her time? Previously the HT spent 2 days in Kinbrace per week, if this was still the case it would be out of sync if it was considered on how many children attended each school
 - The clerical time for Kinbrace is noted as 16 hours, Helmsdale only has 18 – how is this calculated?
 - Would you manage to recruit someone for Kinbrace? What would happen if not, would the HT be forced to teach until someone was appointed?
 - Would Helmsdale lose out on time with specialist teachers? I.e. ASN, PE, Art (the latter 2 are for CCR and we understand this is not applicable in Kinbrace until there is a child in P4 and above)
 - Would children who attended Kinbrace have the offer of music tuition as they do in Helmsdale?
- CHILDREN
 - Do the children who attend Helmsdale PS and are already settled, who are in the Kinbrace catchment have the choice of continuing their education in Helmsdale?
 - Surely it is more beneficial socially for the children to attend Helmsdale PS
 - Academically the children will always have to work within the same groups for group work / pair work, this allows for no variation and the possibility of one child overpowering the other, stunting their educational growth. In Helmsdale partners could vary and children may feel more in their comfort zone.
 - How can the children learn competitive sporting etc if there is so few of them
 - Would all children from Helmsdale and Kinbrace not benefit from having one school i.e. better resources?
 - The children could possibly lose out on after school activities
 - Have the children who attended Kinbrace prior to mothballing been asked how they felt it impacted their life / education (these children are now in High School)
- TRANSPORT
 - Whilst those in attendance were sympathetic to the fact that children who would be in that catchment currently have a longer school day due to the travelling, nobody believed it had impacted negatively on them.
 - Will the roads continue to be gritted in winter?

We may have further points to add as some parents have indicated they wish to do so. I will forward these on in due course. We are happy for these points to be shared or asked at the meeting tonight.

Chairperson, on behalf of Helmsdale Primary Parent Council

From:
Sent: 21 June 2016 13:39
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Kinbrace Primary Closure

This email is in response to the letter received as a parent of a pupil at Helmsdale Primary School.

I am not opposed to the opening of Kinbrace school, but I feel it would hinder and affect the education and opportunities for the rest of the children at Helmsdale P.S. Lowering the general numbers of the school may affect the provision offered to the pupils, such as a playground supervisor (which only got appointed after the number of pupils reached 50), as well as the additional member of canteen staff. This would result in unsupervised play, less adult impact and encouragement in games, and a longer lunch queue - negatively affecting the pupil's enjoyment of their lunch time break.

Lowering the numbers of pupils could result in losing a teacher, classes becoming oversized and limiting the opportunities for activities within the classroom. Because of class sizes it could result in splitting and separating children of the same age and year group within different classes, meaning children of the same age may have more limited opportunities.

Having a school as small as Kinbrace may make it hard to reach aspects of the curriculum due to small numbers. Children will have less opportunities to socialise and when they reach High School age they will need to travel regardless - only without the prior relationships with other pupils.

The money used to reopen Kinbrace could be better spent benefiting all the pupils by providing more resources to the Helmsdale Primary School - such as more computers as currently they have a limited amount. I feel Helmsdale as a Primary School should be of a high standard before opening another school, and opening another school to benefit a small number of pupils should not affect the majority already settled within their school environment.

Thanks

From:
Sent: 22 June 2016 01:49
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Proposed closure of Kinbrace primary school.

Dear Mr Northedge,

I am writing to make my view known on the proposed closure of Kinbrace primary school.

I feel that the costs that would be incurred to re-open are not sustainable in the present economic climate.

We are losing PSA, cleaners and janitors hours all over the highlands - how can it be possible to justify re-opening a school at such great cost, especially when the prospective pupils concerned are already attending and fully integrated (as far as I can see) in Helmsdale primary.

As a parent of pupils in Helmsdale primary school, I am obviously concerned about the impact the re-opening of Kinbrace would have.

How many hours would we lose our already hard pressed head teacher for?

Would Mrs Gill be willing to continue as a cluster head, managing two schools with all the extra work involved?

If not then we would have more disruption at Helmsdale.

Would the resources at helmsdale be diminished? Would we lose visiting teacher hours - PE etc?

Where will the extra money to open Kinbrace come from? Would it even be possible to attract a suitable candidate to teach there?

Apart from the travelling time for the children involved, I fail to see what other benefits are to be had from going to a smaller school. So much learning is done nowadays through group activities and socialising that in my opinion it would actually be to the detriment of the children involved?

I have to conclude (as a tax payer) that given all of the above, I feel that to re-open Kinbrace would be a drain on resources we cannot afford.

Yours,

From:
Sent: 22 June 2016 09:40
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Kinbrace Primary School

Dear Sir,

Unfortunately I will be unable to attend the consultation on the re-opening of Kinbrace Primary School later this evening, but would like to comment on the above.

I am not supporting the re-opening of the school at this time for the following reasons:

1. I do not believe that the social and emotional well being of the Kinbrace pupils is best served by being educated in such a small group.
2. I believe that the subsequent reduction in role at Helmsdale Primary school if pupils were to be educated in Kinbrace instead would reduce class sizes in Helmsdale, reducing the choice of friends for the children there and possibly impacting on the number and distribution of teaching and support staff within Helmsdale, which I believe would be detrimental to the academic and social education of all of the pupils involved.
3. I believe that it would be difficult to recruit a long term member of staff to teach in Kinbrace, resulting in a succession of supply teachers for the Kinbrace pupils, which would not best serve the educational needs of those children.
4. I do not believe that there are enough educational or social benefits to the re-opening of Kinbrace school to make it worth while spending the considerable sums of money necessary to re-open and maintain the school, in the current economic climate I believe that this money would be much better spent if it were allocated to more LSA hours, or improved resources (or even better a couple of additional teachers) within the currently open schools in Sutherland.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments,
Regards

From:
Sent: 22 June 2016 14:20
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Kinbrace school

I dont think kinbrace school should be re-opened. There are not enough children to justify this and I'm sure the money could be better spent elsewhere on education. I also think its important for children in rural areas to interact with other children as much as possible to prepare them for high school etc

Sent from my iPad

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Kinbrace to go to Helmsdale Primary, instead of Kinbrace Primary.

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

1. Close Kinbrace Primary for good, with most of the pupils going to Helmsdale Primary instead. Pupils who lived in Forsinard could go to Melvich Primary instead.
2. Re-open Kinbrace Primary, so pupils from Kinbrace, Badanloch and Forsinard would go to that school and not to Helmsdale or Melvich.
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 Kinbrace Primary.	3
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Kinbrace Primary.	5
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	5

2. Why did you give the answer above?

I don't want to go to Kinbrace school. 1

Because I don't have to go on a bus to get there, I can ride on my bike because it's easier. 2

Because sometimes they don't let me join in their games and I want nice children to play games so we should keep trying for a while. 3

When they get bigger we can go to that school to play games. 2

They might not know what this school is about. 3

Mainly because then we could get a new school here. 1

Because they're nice people and sometimes BM be's nice to me. 3

Don't know 3

Because they might be lonely. 1

They can play with us 3

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

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional information or comments to Highland Council.

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Kinbrace to go to Helmsdale Primary, instead of Kinbrace Primary.

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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 Kinbrace Primary.	1
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Kinbrace Primary.	3
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	1

2. Why did you give the answer above?

Then people will get more friends. 1

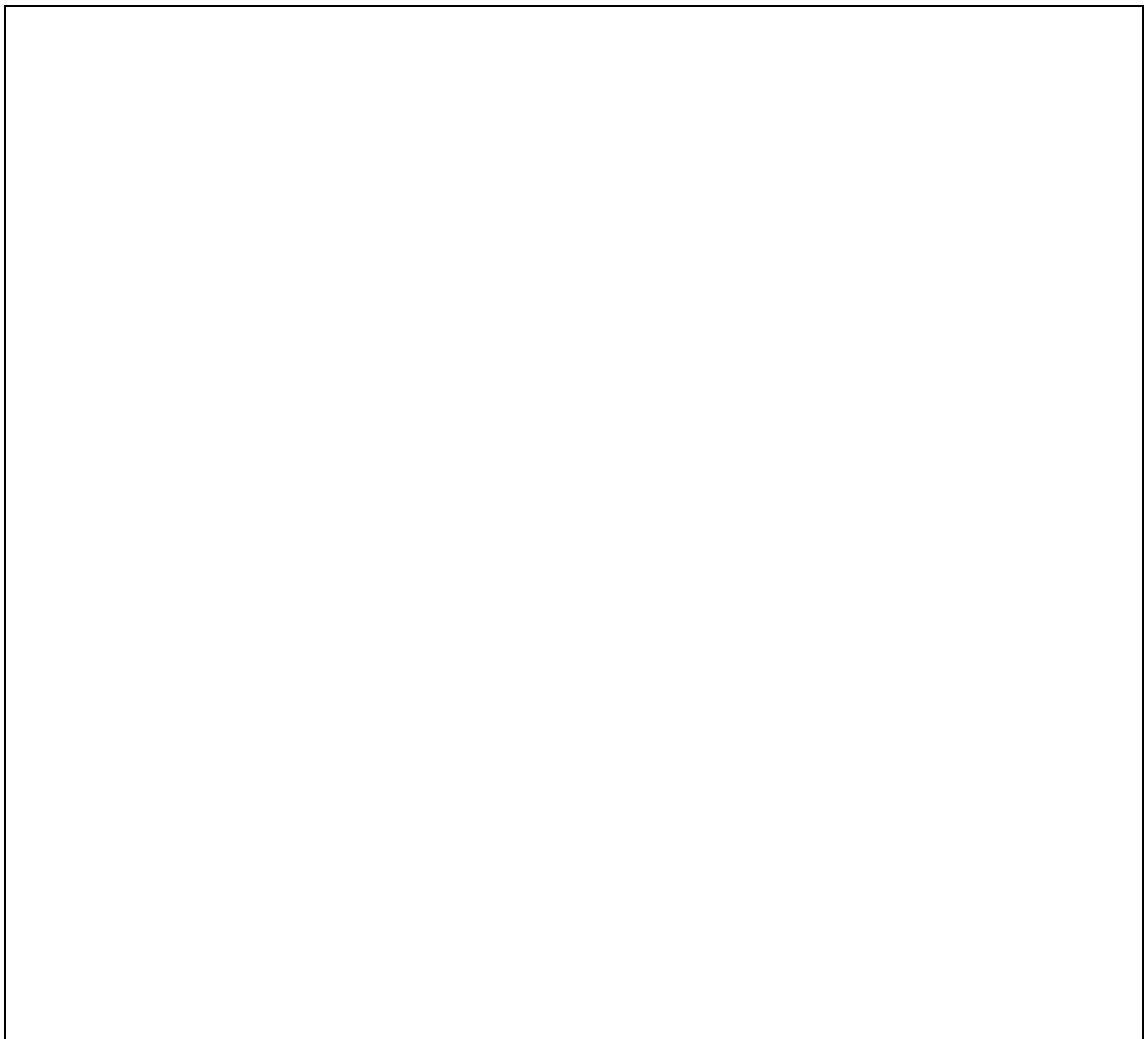
It would be nice to open it so children can go there if they live in Kinbrace. 2

Then we might have less people in our school so we won't have to photocopy stuff. 2

We have lots of people in our school and that school might have none. 2

Because I like this school because the school is really pretty, it's better than my old school. 3

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



For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Kinbrace to go to Helmsdale Primary, instead of Kinbrace Primary.

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

1. Close Kinbrace Primary for good, with most of the pupils going to Helmsdale Primary instead. Pupils who lived in Forsinard could go to Melvich Primary instead.
2. Re-open Kinbrace Primary, so pupils from Kinbrace, Badanloch and Forsinard would go to that school and not to Helmsdale or Melvich.
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 Kinbrace Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Kinbrace Primary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Why did you give the answer above?

Then some people who aren't close to our school can go to Kinbrace school. 2

Because we can make more friends. 1

Because it would just be weird to open a school for just three pupils. 3

Because we like having people coming down from the Strath because we can play together and make new friends. 3

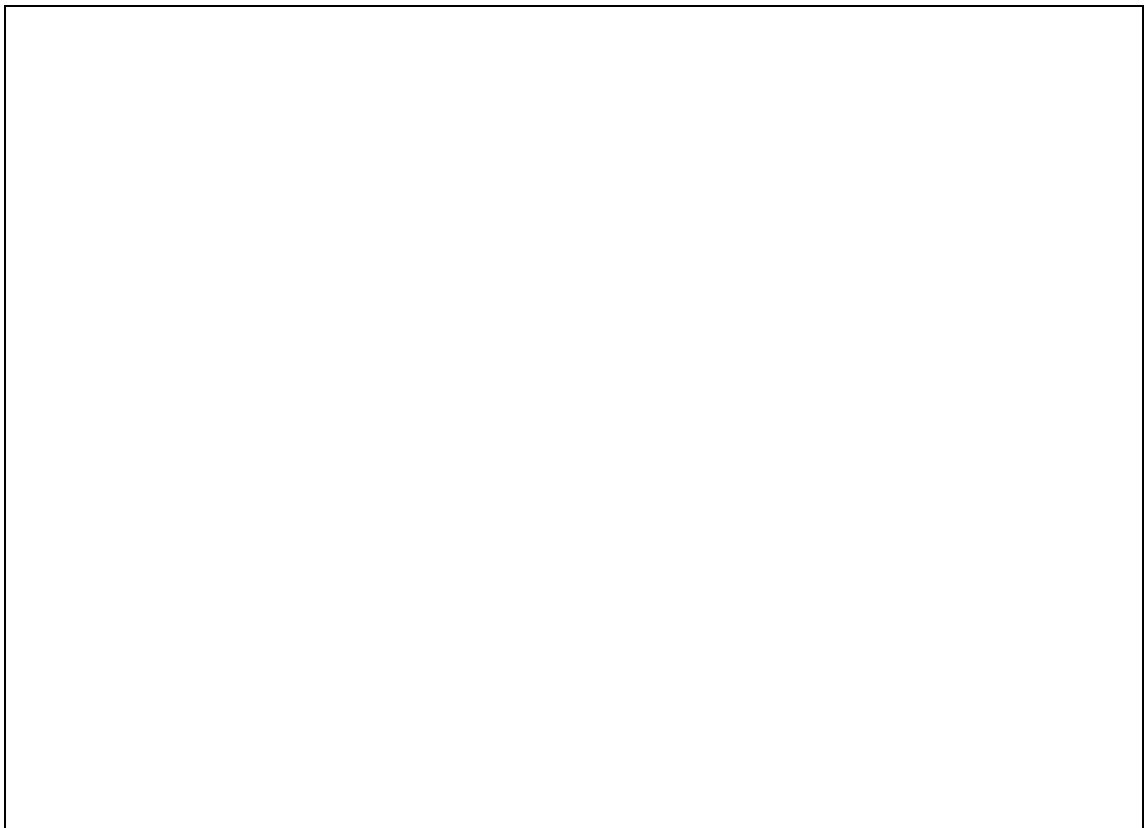
They'll have fun and we'll have fun playing together, like football and stuff and it's really nice that they're coming here. 3

It might change, they might like coming to our school. 3

So our school doesn't get busy and not that noisy. 2

So that the children can look for new friends. 1

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



For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Kinbrace to go to Helmsdale Primary, instead of Kinbrace Primary.

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

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2. Re-open Kinbrace Primary, so pupils from Kinbrace, Badanloch and Forsinard would go to that school and not to Helmsdale or Melvich.
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 Kinbrace Primary.	7
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Kinbrace Primary.	10
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	5

2. Why did you give the answer above?

If it closes we can get more boys and girls in our school. 1

Because then there's another school. 2

I think someone should re-open Kinbrace Primary because it will be a shorter distance for people who live up in Kildonan instead of driving to Helmsdale Primary. 2

I think they should open it because it probably was a good school. It was probably handy for their kids. 2

I ticked it because it is costing loads of money to keep it open when there are only 1-2 pupils and that money could pay another teacher in another school. 1

I think that they should re-open Kinbrace Primary because it will be a shorter distance for people. 2

If we re-open Kinbrace we won't need a school bus. 2

If it stays like this then we can decide later. 3

Because I was not sure. 3

I gave this answer because I didn't know. 3

I chose 3 because I don't know what to choose. 3

I think it should stay as it is so people have more time to decide. 3

We need more time to make a better decision. 3

I gave the answer because hardly anyone will go to it. 1

I chose to close Kinbrace Primary because what's the point in opening the school again to only teach about 10 children. 1

Because it's not fair on them or us. 2

I picked no 2 because it is a shorter trip for the pupils. 2

So there's a shorter trip for the people that would be going to Kinbrace school. 2

The school should re-open because soon we will not have enough transport. 2

They should shut it down because there are only 4 people in the school. 1

I think they should shut it down because the school doesn't have a lot of pupils. 1

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

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional information or comments to the Highland Council.

For a while Highland Council has been trying out an idea for pupils from Kinbrace to go to Helmsdale Primary, instead of Kinbrace Primary.

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

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2. Re-open Kinbrace Primary, so pupils from Kinbrace, Badanloch and Forsinard would go to that school and not to Helmsdale or Melvich.
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 Kinbrace Primary.	4
Idea No. 2 – Re-open Kinbrace Primary.	2
Idea No.3 – Keep trying out the idea for a bit longer.	2

2. Why did you give the answer above?

Because people like it here and if they opened most people would probably just stay (1)

Because if they open it then people going to Helmsdale or Melvich won't have as many friends plus you're wasting money as there are only a few people (1)

I gave the answer because they could get more people to learn in school (1)

I think they should think about it a little bit more (3)

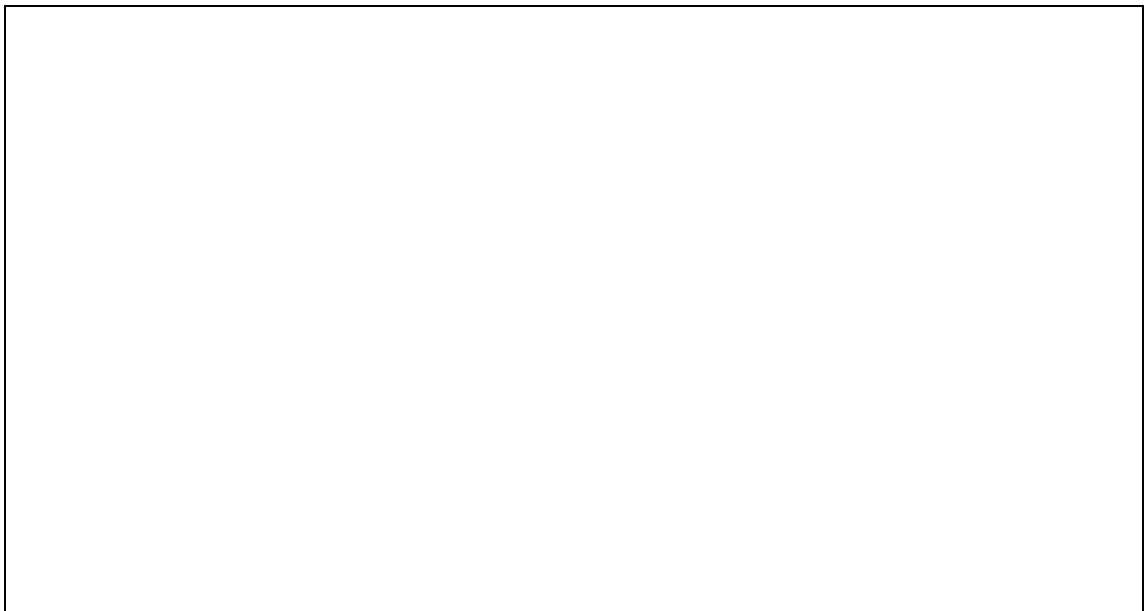
Because it is unfair that the children have to travel so far to school (2)

Because it would be pointless if only 3 or 4 kids go to Kinbrace School (1)

Because it would be hard for Ben, Darren and Vaclav to change schools and make new friends (3)

I picked this answer because kids don't have to travel further to go to school (2)

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



Sent: 03 August 2016 20:16
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Kinbrace closure consultation

I wish to submit my views on the subject of re-opening Kinbrace Primary School. I am a rate and tax payer in Highland and in this time of austerity I cannot see how the re-opening of the school would make any sense.

1) To have a school costing upwards of £130,000 to open for 4 children would be in my view a gross waste of public money, especially considering the financial pressures the Education Department is under. It would be cheaper to send the children to boarding school.

2) I have worked in schools in different regions and in both my training and experience, I have seen the benefits of a diverse group of peers, where children learn to socialise, emotionally and intellectually, by co-operating and sharing activities, resources and ideas. I believe there are 4 children affected here, one of whom is still in the nursery, so that child would be in a solitary situation, while the remaining three would be in the unhappy position of "two being company and three being a crowd" - there would invariably be (given human nature) one child left out, regardless of the best efforts of the teacher. Also with this number brainstorming ideas is limited to the life experiences of three children in similarly isolated areas, so they cannot benefit from the culture capital of a variety of peers from different socio-economic backgrounds.

3) I have heard the argument that the children, if travelling to Helmsdale, may miss out on education in the winter months due to the road being closed in bad weather - in fact, unless the teacher was living in Kinbrace the school would still be shut, since if children could not get to Helmsdale then a teacher driving to work would, in all likelihood be unable to reach Kinbrace!

These are just a few limited arguments for the closure of Kinbrace Primary School, and I have to say, the greatest in my view is financial. I have seen the devastating effects of austerity in the form of cuts to services affecting the elderly and those in ill-health, particularly in my experience the Patient Transport Service and public transport in this area, and while I am well aware that these are different budgets, it seems to me that the funding of Kinbrace would undoubtedly have a knock-on affect elsewhere.

From:
Sent: 22 August 2016 11:28
To: ECS-CRM Sutherland
Subject: Fwd: Kinbrace Primary School

Dear Mr Alexander
I enclose a submission in relation to the above matter.
Yours sincerely

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From:
Date: 20 August 2016 12:38:36 BST
To: Highland Council
Subject: Kinbrace Primary School

From:
Date: 20 August 2016 11:39:14 BST

Subject: Kinbrace Primary School

Sir,

I write in response to the Highland Council's "Proposal to discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School" ("the Proposal").

My interest consists as a farmer and employer in the area surrounding the school. I direct and control the Achentoul Estate Company and Achentoul Farms Ltd. These two companies employ approximately 13 individuals full and part time, 11 of whom live in the Kinbrace catchment area as defined in Appendix A of the attachments to the Proposal.

I have an objection in principle to the Proposal because in line with the gradual withdrawal of services to this remote part of the United Kingdom, the document contains its own self fulfilling prophesy. The more the Council reduces services in this area, the less tolerable and attractive life becomes for those who live here or who might require to do so. The more difficult life becomes, the fewer people will live here. The fewer people live here, the fewer services the Council will seek to provide.

What do I say to a prospective shepherd and his family who respond to an advertisement for a job in this locality when I am asked where their small children will go to school? What reaction can I expect when I tell them that their 5 year old must leave home at 8.15 am and return at 3.45 pm winter and summer, and will have to suffer a long car journey to school each day? In the light of the gradual decrease in services, medical, social, and economic in this area, it is not surprising (as para 4:3 of the Proposal reminds us) that between 2001 and 2011 the population of the catchment area declined by 25%.

I do not seek to argue that Kinbrace PS should re-open now: it has been closed for the last 3 years. During that time it has been "mothballed" and I suggest that that process should continue.

The Proposal contains four short paragraphs discussing such a process. The rationale for discontinuing it and shutting the school permanently is contained in para 6:1.

"Mothballing", the author asserts, "would mean the continuation of the current lack of clarity regarding the future status of the school." Axiomatically the process of "mothballing" contains an element of uncertainty and therefore a certain "lack of clarity." Apart, therefore, from stating the obvious, this sentence, and the Proposal generally, contains no argument for discontinuing the process of mothballing which has existed with no detriment to the community and no identified cost to the public purse for the last 3 years.

Notwithstanding the regular and persistent withdrawal of services in this area, employment opportunities do occur from time to time as jobs are created or as individuals retire. By way of example, a job opportunity arose locally 3 years ago and was filled by a family who live in the catchment area but whose 6 year old child is compelled to travel to Helmsdale rather than be educated at Kinbrace PS. A year ago a vacancy for a shepherd occurred in the area and one family who had applied for the job lost interest when they learned that the Kinbrace PS was shut. Last week a vacancy arose at the garage in Kinbrace which, hopefully, will attract applications from a mechanic and his family. During the course of the next two or three years there is likely to be at least one job vacancy created by retirement, and possibly others, which will hopefully be filled by at least one applicant with family. It is also a fact that houses in the catchment area regularly come up for rent.

None of these considerations have found a place in the Council's Proposal, notwithstanding that many of them were canvassed at the Meeting which took place at the Kinbrace PS with two Council local government officers present on 4 March 2016.

The Kinbrace PS was designed and constructed as a school. It has a commodious classroom and nursery accommodation, as well as a spacious playground. Para 8:3 of the Proposal makes clear that the school is currently rated "B" for educational suitability and "C" for building condition, the same ratings enjoyed by Helmsdale PS.

Moreover there is a perfectly good village hall which the local community repaired and restored three years ago with grant aided funds. There is, therefore, no possibility that "the current school building could be turned over to community use" as envisaged in para 17:2. The closure of the school would necessarily and inevitably create a permanently redundant building which would become an increasing eyesore in the village to all travellers up and down the A897.

Much is made in the Proposal about the advantages of the greater number of pupils at Helmsdale and Melvich PSs. But no consideration at all is given to the long distances which children, some as young as 4 years of age, would be required to travel for example, from Achentoul or Badenloch. These places are, located, respectively, at least 36 and 38 minutes by car direct from Helmsdale PS. With stops to collect other children en route, a very young child living, say, at Achentoul and compelled to drive to Badenloch to collect other pupils, with other stops en route and finally to Helmsdale PS, could expect to spend at least an hour

and a half per day travelling to and from school. Such an imposition on a young child is not consistent with the Highland Council's self imposed "indicator" (para 13.1.5) that "Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school." The fact that the Council recognise that this is not always possible, only serves to underline how undesirable it would be to condemn a child to spend 90 minutes in travel time on a daily basis to and from school from the age of 4 years until 12 years.

The Council's Proposal is on equally shaky ground on the question of costs. These are discussed in paras 15:1 - 4. The Council's figures assert that the current cost of transporting the Kinbrace catchment area pupils to Helmsdale PS is £14,769.

Yet the Proposal goes on to claim that in the event that Kinbrace PS was to reopen at some time in the future, the cost of transporting pupils from various parts of the Kinbrace catchment area would be of the order of £25,000. This calculation depends on the assumption that no "local contractor" would be available to transport pupils within the Kinbrace catchment area to Kinbrace PS. Why should such an assumption be made, unless it be to try to justify the permanent closure of the Kinbrace PS? Are the Council officers who wrote this Proposal so ignorant of this locality and the way in which the Kinbrace PS has been run in the past that they are unaware of the fact that between the early 1930s and 2012, a period of at least 80 years, local children were chauffeured to Kinbrace PS by several generations of the same "contractor" family who lived in Kinbrace?

The Council purport to consider an assessment of the Financial Consequences of the proposed merger of schools in Appendix M (see para 18:1). Yet an examination of that Appendix reveals that although it is headed "Financial Template - Kinbrace PS Closure" it is clear from the body of the document that it relates not to Kinbrace but to Achfary Primary School!

This extraordinary error is symptomatic of a document which deals with the issues concerned in a thoroughly tendentious and disingenuous way.

I urge its rejection.

Sent from my iPhone

Discontinue the provision of education at Kinbrace PS

Dear sir/Madame,

As a parent and local employer of the Kinbrace catchment area, we think that the closure of the school would be a bit premature as at the moment we ourselves have two new job vacancies due to employees retiring. There are also three houses and the two local hotels in the catchment area that are for sale. If the school remained mothballed or reopened it would encourage more families to the local area. Also if the school were to reopen it would offer two/three jobs, not including teachers.

From an employer's view continue to mothball is a must!!

There have been no children in Kinbrace PS, since 2013 as parents were not given the option where their children could go; we were only given Helmsdale as an option. Even though

we were assured that they would consider opening Kinbrace PS for four children in 2013 when mothballing happened. As time has gone on the catchment of Kinbrace PS has diminished, as the school roles in Helmsdale and Melvich decreased there catchment areas have widened, taking children from Kinbrace PS. If the education was to extend Kinbrace PS catchment back an extra three miles max, it would increase the role from five to eight children for 2019-20. As the role stands at the moment.

Please tell us where in the curriculum for excellence does it stipulate education can't be delivered if there are only five or less pupils?

We as parents went to the education six months before our son was due to start school and asked about the reopening of Kinbrace PS, we were told to wait until we registered him for school before an answer was given, which was NO choice just Helmsdale PS. Now our son along with two other boys of similar age have to travel thirty two miles and more a day five days a week instead of walking to the top of the hill, Or being transported a short distance. Our son leave's the house at 8.15 and doesn't return until 3.50. What a life for a wee boy of five, an eight and half hour day. In the mornings they all arrive thirty minutes before school starts why? We have around one hour's worth of homework every day and six hours of school. Do you think this is fair for any child at that

age especially those of primary 1-3 to do an eight and half hour day? I don't!!

From what I have read, this is about MONEY, NOT THE CHILDREN!

What about Loch choire? Are they not allowed families?

There is no mention that you leave the tarred road at Badanloch and then travel twelve miles up a dirt track road. It take's around forty five minutes in a 4x4, when the road is good to get there. How far do you expect a child to travel? There is also no road to Ben Armine Lodge from Kinbrace?

All the children that would be currently going to Kinbrace PS if it had opened in August 2015 would have been two primary ones and one primary two, with two children for nursery. All similar age.

Education in Kinbrace PS: we had the music teacher, P.E teacher and Art teacher that all came from Farr high school to visit for six weeks rotation. They had swimming lessons in Bettyhill. The kid's loved it. They did telly conference with children all over the world. The world of IT has not gone backwards it's moved forward. And we believe Kinbrace PS could move forward too if it was allowed to do so. Kinbrace PS was the hub of the community, where the kids learnt about community spirit, and warmly inviting everyone to join in for any occasion, wheather they are old or young.

We as a family would encourage the reopen or re-mothballing of Kinbrace PS.

Yours Sincerely

zib

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 24, 2016 1:24 PM
Subject: [REDACTED], response to the proposed closure of the Kinbrace Primary School.

Dear Sir,

I write as a resident, married with family, and local employer in the Kinbrace area.

Borrobol Estate has three resident families and employs several part-timers.

Firstly, educational effectiveness, a target of the government. I have had 4 children schooled at Kinbrace. During the year when my daughter graduated from University two former pupils managed to get first class degrees. Its educational satisfactoriness as historic record is not in doubt.

I have read [REDACTED] : submission to you and endorse it. Alternative schooling involves a very long journey for young children. I have lived 3 miles from Kinbrace for 36 years and can attest that the weather in winter will often make this journey awkward in the extreme. Conversely, there were very few occasions when my children were at the school when classes were not open and everyone managed to get there.

I agree with [REDACTED], too, that to attract potential employees here is harder if there is no local school. For any potential family person schooling is the first question. I have found that. Again, it is government policy to encourage population in the glens. Shutting a school goes against that.

You mention the economics of transport. The need for transport also creates employment and sustains the area, a good objective.

I was the chairman of the Kildonan and Kinbrace Amenities Association for a long time. I can confirm that there is an adequate building for community use already in the area and specifically designed for it. The school has no purpose as a second community building.

'Mothballing' of the school, as we have seen for the last few years, seems to me to be the best way forward. At the present time there are 3 houses in Kinbrace for sale. There must be a good chance therefore that at least one new arrival will have family. The presence of a potential school will encourage a family to come here. The absence of one will mean that the likelihood of any new arrival being of working age is less, and it is worth considering that retired people, constituting the alternative type of new resident, need services more than they provide them. The cost-benefit aspect of this should be part of your over-arching policy in deciding about the future of this school building.

I support the continuation of the present situation and am unconvinced by the short-term arguments against it.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret MacDonald - Secretary

From: Helmsdale Secretary <helmsdalecouncil@yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: 21 September 2016 17:19
To: Ian Jackson
Subject: Re: Kinbrace School

Dear Ian

Finally I have response from the Helmsdale and District Council regarding the closure of Kinbrace School which I would be glad if you would pass on to Gary for me.

Realistically we know that Kinbrace School cannot stay open however we have 2 concerns:

Firstly transport to and from school for the children. We are aware that transport has to be provided but we are not clear what form this will take. There would be real concerns about children [potentially as young as 5 years old going unaccompanied on the train and who would collect them at Helmsdale station. If they are being brought in by car/bus will this be from their own home or will there be a collection point in Kinbrace? The journey however supplied will make it a very long day for these young children.

We also have concerns about what effect this will have on the role of the Head Teacher at Helmsdale School. Kinbrace was part of the "cluster" and we would have serious concerns about any negative effect the closure would have on our excellent Head Mistress and the future of Helmsdale Primary

Again please pass on my sincere apologies for having had a wasted visit to Helmsdale.

Regards

Penny

Penny Kane
Secretary,
Helmsdale and District Community Council
helmsdalecouncil@yahoo.co.uk
01431 821888

On Wednesday, 14 September 2016, 13:52, Helmsdale Secretary <helmsdalecouncil@yahoo.co.uk> wrote:

Thank I an for being so understanding. I have asked for comments to reach me by Friday this week which I will get to you by Monday at the latest. and again send my apologies please

Regards
Penny

Penny Kane
Secretary,
Helmsdale and District Community Council

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School and divide the catchment area between Helmsdale Primary and Melvich Primary Schools.

1. Introduction

1.1. 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 Kinbrace Primary School and divide the catchment area between Helmsdale Primary and Melvich Primary Schools**. 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.

1.2 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 22 June 2016 in connection to 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 information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Helmsdale and Kinbrace Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 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 closure of Kinbrace 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 formal consultation ran from 30 May until 24 August. The council posted the consultation document on its website. It issued copies of the document to pupils and parents in the catchment areas of Helmsdale, Melvich and Altnaharra Primary Schools and to the Parent Councils of those schools. Further copies were available to pupils attending the associated secondary schools of Farr and Golspie High Schools as well as community groups. The council made appropriate arrangements to gather the views of children attending Helmsdale Primary. The council placed advance notice of a public meeting in the local newspaper. The meeting held on 22 June was attended by less than ten stakeholders, the majority of whom were supportive of the proposal. Ten written communications were received in response to the consultation. The majority were in favour of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Kinbrace Primary School is a rural school which was mothballed at the end of session 2012-13, when the school roll fell to one child. No children have attended since the school was mothballed. Projections for the next four years predict a maximum roll of five children if all parents choose to send their children to the school.

3.2 The proposal has clear educational benefits to children in The Highland Council. If the proposal goes ahead children who live in the catchment area which served Kinbrace will learn as part of a larger teaching group. This larger number and wider range of peers is likely to allow increased opportunities for socialising and making friends. The larger peer group allows children to engage more appropriately in peer and self-assessment activities. This could also provide greater opportunities to be involved in team sports and group activities which have the potential to contribute positively to children's social and emotional development.

3.3 The majority of parents saw benefits in their children having good access to visiting art, music and sports specialists. This access may be reduced if Kinbrace

were to reopen. Almost all parents and staff saw benefits in making the transition from Helmsdale Primary to secondary education as part of a larger group. The majority of parents in the Kinbrace catchment were, on balance, in favour of the proposal. Whilst they acknowledge the potential reduction in occasional local events with Kinbrace residents, they recognise the benefits afforded by the children attending a larger school with a greater number of children. Although the majority of Kinbrace parents would prefer less travelling time for their children, they do not consider it the most significant factor in determining where they wish their children to be educated.

3.4 Although the council had rated the building conditions of both Helmsdale and Kinbrace Primary Schools as B for suitability and C for condition, the nursery at Helmsdale has recently been refurbished to make it a very attractive learning environment. Greater numbers of children in Helmsdale provide improved opportunities for children in the nursery to learn through play. The parent and toddler room provides an opportunity for parents to meet and support each other and to develop strong family engagement with the school.

3.5 The Helmsdale Parent Council were strongly supportive of the proposal. They saw benefits for all children attending the school. They were concerned about the possible impact on the school due to reduced staffing and resources in Helmsdale Primary if Kinbrace Primary were to reopen. Almost all stakeholders were in favour of the revised catchment areas outlined. The majority of children who met with HM Inspectors and who gave their views were in favour of the proposal.

3.6 In arriving at its proposal, the council has given good consideration to any reasonable alternatives. Through mothballing, they have provided time for full consideration and sought to allow time for any increase in the local population. A few local employers feel that continuing to mothball the school will help to attract potential residents and employees. There is a lack of evidence to support this view, however, as there has been no upward trend. Kinbrace has a village hall which is used for community events from March to October each year. Although still available for community use since the mothballing of the school in 2012, the school building has not been used for community events and activities during that time. The council has expressed its willingness to discuss with the local community alternative uses for the school building. Reopening Kinbrace Primary School is most likely to lead to increased emissions from the school building itself and from increased traffic.

3.7 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. Rural and economic impact assessments conducted by the council identify few negative impacts, which the majority of parents consider are outweighed by the positive benefits of their children being educated in Helmsdale Primary.

3.8 The proposal will allow the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources as it will not be burdened with maintaining a 'mothballed' building.

3.9 During the consultation period the council was notified of alleged inaccuracies in the proposal. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies. In its final consultation report, the council will

need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it.

4. Summary

The proposal to close Kinbrace Primary School has the potential to continue to provide improved educational benefits for children. Almost all staff and the majority of parents and children support the council's plans. A few local employers would prefer the continued mothballing of the school as they feel that this may make it easier to attract families into the area as job opportunities become available. Historic evidence does not suggest this as a compelling argument in terms of making a significant impact on the roll of the school or on local employment. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies notified to it. If the council decides to proceed with its plans to close Kinbrace Primary School, it should work with the local community in exploring possible future uses for the school building.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
September 2016**

Financial Template- Kinbrace PS closure

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Forecast revenue costs for Kinbrace PS			
	Costs for full financial year (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving schools	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
KINBRACE PRIMARY SCHOOL			
<i>School costs</i>			
<i>Employee costs</i>			
teaching staff	86,540		-86,540
support staff	8,515		-8,515
teaching staff training (CPD etc)			0
support staff training			0
Supply costs	2,338		-2,338
<i>Building costs:</i>			
property insurance			0
non domestic rates			0
water & sewerage charges	196		-196
energy costs	3,760		-3,760
cleaning (contract or inhouse)			0
building repair & maintenance	132		-132
grounds maintenance			0
facilities management costs			0
revenue costs arising from capital			0
other			0
<i>School operational costs:</i>			
learning materials			0
catering (contract or inhouse)			0
SQA costs			0
other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	1,489		-1,489
<i>Transport costs:</i>			
home to school	10,000	14,769	4,769
other pupil transport costs			0
staff travel			0
SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	112,970	14,769	-98,201
<i>Income:</i>			
Sale of meals	0		0
Lets			0
External care provider			0
Other			0
SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	0	0	0
TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	112,970	14,769	-98,201
UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	28,242	3,692	-24,550

Note: As Kinbrace 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. As the school is currently mothballed these savings are already being realised.

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	0
non domestic rates	0
water & sewerage charges	0
energy costs	0
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	0

Table 4

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

Table 5

Impact on GAE	
none	0
GAE IMPACT	