



East Ayrshire
COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

SORN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The following schools are affected by this Consultative Document:

- **Sorn Primary School**
- **Catrine Primary School**
- **Mauchline Primary School**

This document has been issued by East Ayrshire Council's Executive Cabinet for consultation in terms of the Education (Publications and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulation 1981 and Amendment Regulation 1987, 1988 and 1989.

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL SERVICES**

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Proposal

That subject to the outcome of this consultation exercise:-

- **Current education provision in Sorn Primary School and its existing building be discontinued with effect from June 2008, or as soon as possible thereafter.**
- **Further that the future primary educational provision for pupils currently attending Sorn Primary School should be determined by the Council in accordance with one of the options set out within this report, as yet to be determined.**

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL'S VISION FOR THE SCHOOL ESTATE

- 1.1 East Ayrshire Council has an established vision for its school estate which will ensure the delivery of a modern curriculum in school buildings that are suitable for purpose. This vision further states:

“East Ayrshire Council’s Department of Educational and Social Services: committed to providing choice, maximising opportunity for all, developing the potential of individuals and meeting needs through inclusion”

- 1.2 This statement covers every aspect of the Department’s work including the management and development of educational establishments. The Council’s 2004 School Estate Management Plan states that development and improvement in the fabric of school buildings is a key component in facilitating the learning and teaching process.

- 1.3 The Council has also approved the Department’s objectives for achieving its aims. These are as follows:

- to reduce surplus capacity in primary schools;
- to address property maintenance issues;
- to meet statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA); and

- to improve property flexibility.

- 1.4 East Ayrshire Council also subscribes to the vision for Scotland’s children as set out in 2004 by The Curriculum Review Group in the document *A Curriculum for Excellence*, which states that “Our aspiration is to enable all children to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society”.
- 1.5 The proposals set out in this document will ensure that all these issues are addressed in a manner which will achieve improvements for all the pupils and staff of Sorn Primary School, whilst also obtaining best value for the Council.

2 EDUCATIONAL PROVISION AT SORN PRIMARY SCHOOL

NOTE: In order to develop this document, the Council has used school roll projections. These are the best estimate of pupil numbers at the time the document was produced. Readers of the document should be aware that the prediction of school rolls into the medium and long term future cannot be done precisely. Figures given in the document should therefore be read with caution and the Council acknowledges this feature of the consultation process.”

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Despite the best efforts of staff, parents and pupils, and recognising the excellent work that continues in Sorn Primary School, the school does not accord with East Ayrshire Council’s vision for its schools’ estate. Even if the building were to be brought up to a modern standard, the design of the building and the small school roll would still not afford staff the flexibility and facilities to deliver *A Curriculum for Excellence* to best effect. The declining roll calls into question the long term viability of the school as a separate establishment.

2.2 Sorn Primary School

- 2.2.1 Sorn Primary School provides non-denominational primary education for pupils from in and around the village of Sorn.
- 2.2.2 The school has a working capacity of 92 pupils with a current pupil roll of 67, at September 2007.
- 2.2.2 The pupil roll projection through to 2015 predicts a steady decline in pupil numbers, as indicated in the following table:

Table 1 : Sorn Primary School Roll Projections

| Academic Session | Pupil Roll |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004/05 | 88 |
| 2005/06 | 84 |
| 2006/07 | 75 |

| | |
|---------|----|
| 2007/08 | 67 |
| 2008/09 | 63 |
| 2009/10 | 49 |
| 2010/11 | 47 |
| 2011/12 | 41 |
| 2012/13 | 39 |
| 2013/14 | 38 |
| 2014/15 | 37 |

* This table shows actual pupil numbers, from the September census, for each year up to 2007, and projected numbers, taking account of proposed new house building and all other known factors, through to 2015.

2.2.3 There are currently 25 pupils on a placing request in the school, coming from Catrine, Auchinleck and Galston Primary Schools.

2.3 Educational issues:

2.3.1 Because of the small numbers of pupils and limited resources, it is difficult for small schools to provide the breadth and variety of experience available to pupils in a larger school. This is because:

- in a small school, in the case of Sorn Primary with a population of fewer than 70 pupils across the age range P1 to P7, more of the pupils have to be taught in classes made up of two or more separate stages, that is, composite or multiple composite classes.
- resource management is particularly difficult in a multiple composite situation;
- the *Curriculum for Excellence* is geared to enabling all children to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Confidence, responsible citizenship and the opportunity to contribute effectively are more readily nurtured in a larger school with a mix of pupils of all abilities and a wide range of opportunities and learning situations in which to take part;
- modern teaching methods which make use, for example, of self assessment and peer assessment depend for their effectiveness on interaction between pupils of similar age and stage;
- management of the curriculum presents problems in a smaller school; it is difficult to ensure progression, continuity and pace in a multi-composite situation; it is the peer group that provides children with challenge and motivation and enables the teacher to accelerate the pace of learning;
- a small school, whilst providing a secure and caring environment, lacks the variety of 'extra-curricular' activities and the social mix that pupils experience in a larger school. Team games, for example, are more difficult to organise, pupils are less likely to experience the thrill of 'playing

for the school' and some pupils have inadequate opportunities fully to develop their social skills;

- many pupils coming from a small school tend to find the move to secondary school more difficult, having come from a small and relatively sheltered background.
- It can prove difficult to recruit and retain staff in small schools, which lack many of the career advantages of larger establishments.

2.3.2 The issues summarised above are made more urgent by the fact that Sorn Primary has a falling school roll, projected to fall to under 40 pupils by 2012. Falling rolls makes staff deployment more complex, fewer pupils means fewer members of staff and instead of providing greater continuity of teaching and support for pupils, the effect can be the opposite.

2.4 **Buildings issues:**

2.4.1 Since 1999 East Ayrshire Council has invested over £100,000 in maintenance and improvements at Sorn Primary School and, despite this, the condition of the building remains completely unsatisfactory. The school has no staffroom, no gym hall and is cramped despite operating at less than its working capacity.

2.4.2 The cost of improvement work to bring the school building to a satisfactory condition, compliant with the requirements of the DDA, is estimated to be approximately £420,000. The condition of the building is such that works are required on almost all aspects of the building, including plumbing, roofs, windows and heating. Even if this work was carried the building would not be set out in a way which could deliver a modern curriculum. In addition there would still be no gym hall built within the school and the village hall would have to be used for dining and physical education.

3 **THE PROPOSAL**

3.1 **It is for the reasons outlined in section 2.1 to 2.4 above that East Ayrshire Council wishes to consult on the proposal to discontinue educational provision at Sorn Primary School and to transfer the pupils to another establishment to continue their primary school education.**

4 **OPTIONS FOR THE CONTINUING PRIMARY EDUCATION OF SORN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

4.1 In addition to receiving comment on the proposal, the Council wishes to receive feedback on options for the continuing primary education of children currently attending Sorn Primary School, as outlined below. Comments on the identification of other suitable options are also welcome.

4.2 **Option 1 – Status Quo: maintain Sorn Primary School as a separate establishment and in its present accommodation.**

4.2.1 Benefits of Option 1:

- involves no disruption for current Sorn Primary pupils;
- retains the primary school within the Sorn community.

4.2.2 Issues to consider in relation to Option 1:

- fails to address issues associated with Sorn Primary School building, which is can never fully meet the delivery of the 21st Century curriculum;
- more than 50% of Sorn Primary School pupils attend on placing request from outwith the school's delineated catchment area;
- Sorn Primary School building is not DDA compliant;
- investment in repairs and maintenance cannot be justified on best value grounds.

4.3 Option 2 – Close Sorn Primary School and transfer pupils to Catrine Primary School

4.3.1 Catrine Primary School

4.3.2 Catrine primary School provides non-denominational primary education for pupils from in and around Catrine.

4.3.3 The school has a working capacity of 231 pupils with a current pupil roll of 116, at September 2007. The combined roll in 2008-09, if this option were chosen, would be around 200 pupils, which would represent efficient use of the building.

4.3.4 The pupil roll projection through to 2015 predicts an overall decline in pupil numbers, as indicated in the following table:

Table 2 : Catrine Primary School Roll Projections

| Academic Session | Pupil Roll |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004/05 | 137 |
| 2005/06 | 142 |
| 2006/07 | 136 |
| 2007/08 | 116 |
| 2008/09 | 133 |
| 2009/10 | 132 |
| 2010/11 | 127 |
| 2011/12 | 125 |
| 2012/13 | 123 |
| 2013/14 | 118 |
| 2014/15 | 115 |

* This table shows actual pupil numbers, from the September census, for each year up to 2007, and projected numbers, taking account of proposed new house building and all other known factors, through to 2015.

4.3.5 Catrine Primary School's existing building is basically sound but in need of upgrading to bring it to a standard suitable for the delivery of the modern curriculum and compliant with DDA legislation. This work will be undertaken and would ensure that, if this is the chosen option, the pupils and staff from both schools enjoy high quality accommodation.

4.3.6 Benefits of Option 2:

- improved accommodation and learning environment for all pupils and staff at both schools;
- better suited to the delivery of A Curriculum for Excellence;
- pupils currently attending Sorn by placing request would now be at their zoned school, entitled to free travel if living more than 1 mile from the school;
- more efficient use of staffing and resources;
- refurbishment would ensure DDA compliance;
- reduced maintenance and property costs after refurbishment;
- addresses 'over capacity' issue at both schools.

4.3.7 Issues to consider in relation to Option 2:

- increased travel for some pupils;
- additional transport costs for the authority;
- loss of the primary school to the Sorn community;
- some pupils and parents likely to prefer the smaller school environment.

4.4 **Option 3 – Close Sorn Primary School and transfer pupils to Mauchline Primary School**

4.4.1 **Mauchline Primary School**

4.4.2 Mauchline Primary School provides non-denominational education for pupils from in and around the community of Mauchline.

4.4.3 The school has a working capacity of 460 pupils with a current pupil roll of 312, as at September 2007. The combined roll in 2008-09, if this option were chosen, would be around 375 pupils, which would represent efficient but not cramped use of the building.

4.4.4 The pupil roll projection through to 2015 predicts a gradual decline in pupil numbers, as indicated in the following table:

Table 1 : Mauchline Primary School Roll Projections

| Academic Session | Pupil Roll |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004/05 | 389 |
| 2005/06 | 363 |
| 2006/07 | 328 |
| 2007/08 | 312 |
| 2008/09 | 323 |
| 2009/10 | 314 |
| 2010/11 | 301 |
| 2011/12 | 298 |
| 2012/13 | 303 |
| 2013/14 | 298 |
| 2014/15 | 293 |

* This table shows actual pupil numbers, from the September census, for each year up to 2007, and projected numbers, taking account of proposed new house building and all other known factors, through to 2015.

4.4.5 Mauchline Primary School has been completely refurbished and extended, thus creating an excellent and modern school building.

4.4.6 Benefits of Option 3:

- 'state of the art' educational facility at refurbished Mauchline Primary School;
- vastly improved accommodation and learning environment for all pupils and staff;
- better suited to the delivery of A Curriculum for Excellence;
- more efficient use of staffing and resources;
- very healthy school roll;
- fully compliant with requirements of the DDA;
- reduced maintenance and property costs;
- addresses 'over capacity' issue at both schools.

4.4.7 Issues to consider in relation to Option 3:

- increased travel for some pupils;
- additional transport costs for the authority;
- loss of the primary school to the Sorn community;
- some pupils and parents likely to prefer the smaller school environment.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Staffing Implications

- 5.1.1 The proposal as outlined in Options 2 or 3 would result in the majority of the staff at Sorn Primary School transferring to Catrine Primary School or Mauchline Primary School with the pupils. It may be necessary for a small number of staff to transfer to other duties in another school (However, para. 5.1.4 below, should be noted). There would be no compulsory redundancies for permanent staff.
- 5.1.2 This would be achieved without compromising the staffing standard, the ratio of staff to pupils. Pupils would have exactly the same level of support, geared to their individual needs if necessary, as at present.
- 5.1.3 Staff will be fully consulted about their future as will the appropriate trade unions representing all grades of staff affected. The particular wishes of each member of staff will be taken into consideration.
- 5.1.4 If Option 2 or 3 is chosen, the receiving school would be entitled to a staffing enhancement of upto 2.0 FTE (full time equivalent) for a period of two years, in order to ease the transition, assuming the combined roll is over 200 pupils. The school would also receive additional clerical support and resources over this period.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 Savings overall, from the revenue budget, in the region of £104,000 per annum would be anticipated if Sorn primary School were to close and the pupils transfer to Catrine or Mauchline. This figure includes, among other things, rates, furniture and fittings, cleaning, janitorial services and health and safety expenditure. Against this, there would be increased transport costs in transporting some of the Sorn pupils to their new school.
- 5.2.2 The cost of repairs and maintenance of the refurbished school would be relatively low for many years to come.
- 5.2.3 Any proposed disposal of the Sorn Primary School site would require resolution of an existing contractual restriction as to the use of the site and would involve negotiation with a third party. Subject to that process, all proceeds received by the Council from any subsequent disposal would be used to enhance educational provision.

5.3 Transport implications

- 5.3.1 East Ayrshire Council operates a policy of providing free transport to school for any primary school pupil living more than one mile away, by the shortest safe walking distance, from their zoned school. Any pupil living within the catchment area of the combined school and more than 1 mile away from the school would therefore qualify for free transport to school.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet agree to adopt for the purpose of consultation the proposal:

i) That subject to the outcome of this consultation exercise:-

- Current education provision at Sorn Primary School and its existing building be discontinued with effect from June 2008, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Further that the future primary educational provision for pupils currently attending Sorn Primary School should be determined by the Council in accordance with one of the options set out within this report, as yet to be determined

6.2 It is also recommended that:

i) interested parties be invited to make written or electronic submissions on the proposal to the following addresses :-

By post :Executive Director of Educational & Social Services, East Ayrshire Council, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock KA3 7BU.

By e-mail: educationconsultation@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Written submissions should be returned no later than Monday 21 January 2008.

ii) the Executive Director of Educational & Social Services prepare a report on the results of the consultative process for consideration at a future meeting of the Cabinet

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services