



Dumfries and Galloway Council
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing

Proposal Document: August 2026

Review of Education Provision
Ae Primary School

Proposal for the closure of Ae Primary School

Summary Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at Ae Primary School, which is currently temporarily closed, and to realign its catchment area to Nethermill Primary School. As a result, the feeder secondary school for pupils currently living within the Ae Primary School catchment area would change from Dumfries High School to Lockerbie Academy.

It is proposed that education provision at Ae Primary School be discontinued with effect from 23 April 2027.

Reasons for this proposal

This is considered to be the most appropriate option to address the reasons for the proposal, which are:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggest that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

This document has been issued by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended) and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It has been prepared by the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate with input from other Council Directorates.

Publication Information

The proposal paper will be available, free of charge, at:

- Ae Primary School, Ae;
- Nethermill Primary School, Parkgate; and
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters.

And published on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website:

<https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/consultations-engagements/statutory-consultation-discontinuation-education-provision-ae-primary-school>

Copies of this paper are also available on request from:

Statutory Consultation – Ae Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

E-mail: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

To request this information in a more accessible format or alternative language, please contact the postal or email address listed above.

Formal notice of the Proposal and relevant information will be given and be made available to the consultees listed as follows:

- a) the Parent Council or Combined Parent Council of any affected school,
- b) the parents of the pupils at any affected school,
- c) the parents of any children expected by the education authority to attend any affected school within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper,
- d) the pupils at any affected school (in so far as the education authority considers them to be of a suitable age and maturity),
- e) the staff (teaching and other) at any affected school,
- f) any trade union which appears to the education authority to be representative of the persons mentioned in sub-paragraph (e),
- g) the community council (if any),
- h) the community planning partnership (within the meaning of section 4(5) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the area of the local authority in which any affected school is situated,
- (ha) any other community planning partnership that the education authority considers relevant,]
- i) any other education authority that the education authority considers relevant,
- j) any other users of any affected school that the education authority considers relevant.

1.0 Introduction

On 29 June 2023, Elected Members of Dumfries and Galloway Council's Education and Learning Committee noted the position of Ae Primary School. The school roll had fallen sharply over the academic year up to March 2023. A meeting was held between staff, parents and council officers where the families in attendance stated a preference to remain at the school but felt the school roll had dropped too low, so expressed their desire to enrol their children at alternative schools. The school roll following the Easter break for Ae Primary School was zero, and there were no Primary 1 enrolment made for academic year 2023/24. Members agreed to the temporary closure and the realignment of the catchment area to Nethermill Primary School.

Education and Learning Committee, 29 June 2023 – Item 12

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5752&Ver=4>

Members of Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee on 8 February 2024 agreed to grant a two-year Licence to Occupy Ae Primary School and land to Ae Community Council. The Ae locality did not have a hireable space / venue that community groups could utilise, other than the Primary School. Appropriate break clause arrangements were put in place to ensure the school would be available for educational purposes throughout the temporary closure period should demand result in the school reopening. The current lease expires in September 2026.

Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee, 8 February 2024 – Item 15

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=552&MId=5899&Ver=4>

Families were given the opportunity during the P1 enrolment process for academic year 2024/25 and 2025/26 to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School; catchment families, ward officers, ward members and Ae Community Councils were contacted via email to notify them of the enrolment (P1) and transfer (P2-P7) opportunity. No enrolments or transfers were received for either academic year and Ae Primary School remained temporary closed.

Education and Learning Committee, Thursday 14 March 2024 – Item 7

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5909&Ver=4>

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, Thursday 1 July 2025 – Item 14

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6229>

As per the opportunity mentioned above, the same process was followed for academic year 2026/27, two enrolment forms were received for Ae Primary School for Primary 1. Members of Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 12 May 2026 noted the due to the low number the school will remain temporarily closed for academic year 2026/27. Also noted, was the families that submitted enrolment forms were contacted to inform them of the outcome and discuss a suitable alternative school for their children for Primary 1.

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, Tuesday 12 May 2026 – Item 6

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6518&Ver=4>

Dumfries and Galloway Council commenced Phase One – Preliminary Requirements under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 for Ae Primary School in April 2026, to determine the most appropriate next steps in line with the statutory framework. The statutory process for the closure of a rural school is laid out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act, as amended, introduced a presumption against closure of a rural school and details specific requirements which the education authority is required to follow if they are formulating a proposal to close a rural school. This includes the introduction of certain preliminary requirements which must be satisfied prior to the formulation of a proposal. It is necessary to consider any reasonable alternatives before considering closure. It is also necessary to consider the impact on the wider community of a potential closure and the impact of any different travel arrangements. These factors have been considered as part of the preliminary requirements which were undertaken prior to this proposal being written and are set out in the Preliminary Requirements document, which is attached as Appendix 3. Members of Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on Tuesday 30 June 2026 agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of Ae Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, Tuesday 30 June 2026 – Item 7.

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6519>

In addition, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 provides communities with the ability to seek ownership or management of public assets through the Community Asset Transfer process. Should the proposal ultimately be implemented, local community organisations may wish to consider whether the school building could support alternative community uses in the future.

Councils, as Education Authorities, have a statutory duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education throughout their area for both current and future generations of learners. This duty is reflected in the Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023–2028 and the Council's commitment to ensuring that educational provision remains sustainable, inclusive and responsive to the needs of local communities.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has also had regard to the Scottish Government's Building Better Schools strategy, which promotes a school estate that is fit for purpose, well maintained and accessible to local communities. A key element of the strategy is the use of School Estate Management Plans to support the effective management of school buildings and to identify long-term priorities for investment and change. The strategy recognises that strategic changes to school provision, including the rationalisation of schools where this is necessary to ensure sustainability, should be considered as part of local authorities' wider planning for the future of education and public assets.

Dumfries and Galloway Council aims to improve education and learning opportunities to help all children, young people, and citizens fulfil their potential. This begins with pre-school, continues through school, and progresses into further or higher education or transition into work. Dumfries and Galloway Council works with partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so that everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community. The strategic outcomes of Dumfries and Galloway Council include:

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable, and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people, and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

2.0 Proposal

It is proposed that education provision at Ae Primary School be discontinued with effect from 23 April 2027, and that its catchment area be realigned to Nethermill Primary School.

Maps illustrating the current and proposed catchment area options for the Ae Primary School catchment are detailed below in Figures 1 and 2.

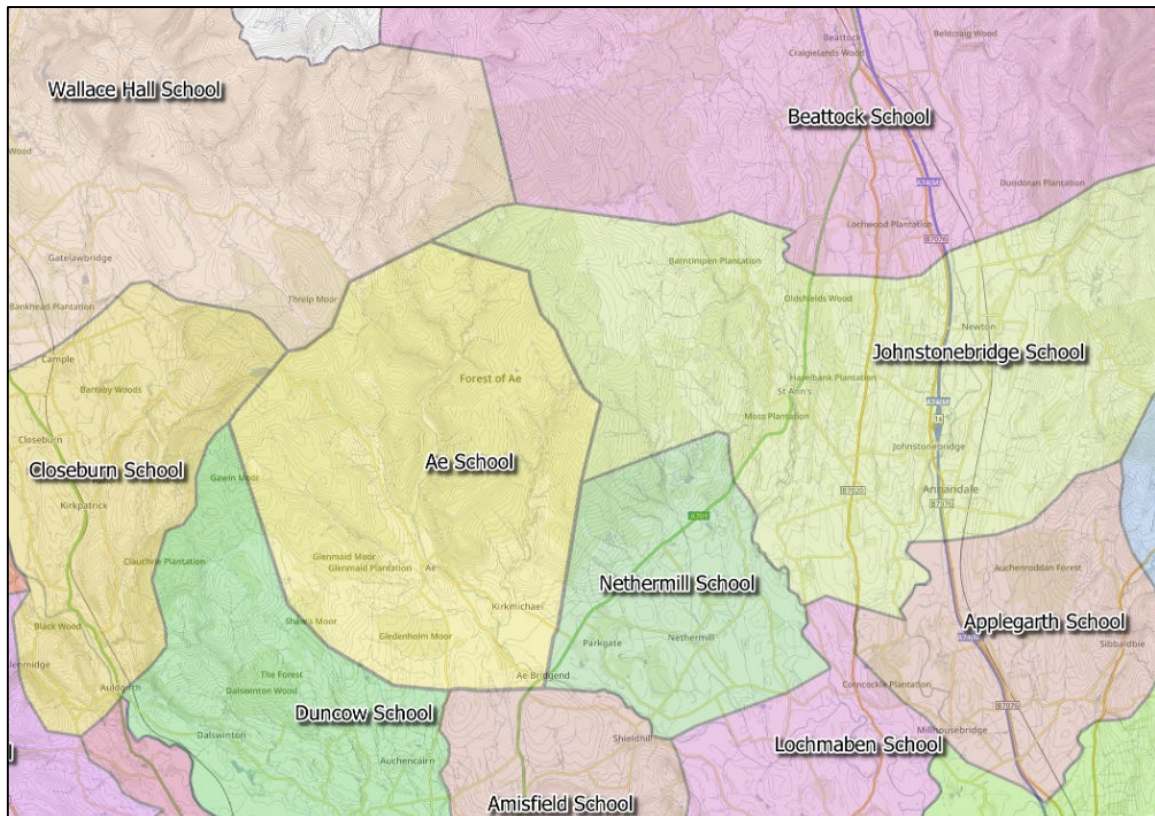


Figure 1: Ae Primary School Catchment Area and Neighbouring Primary Schools

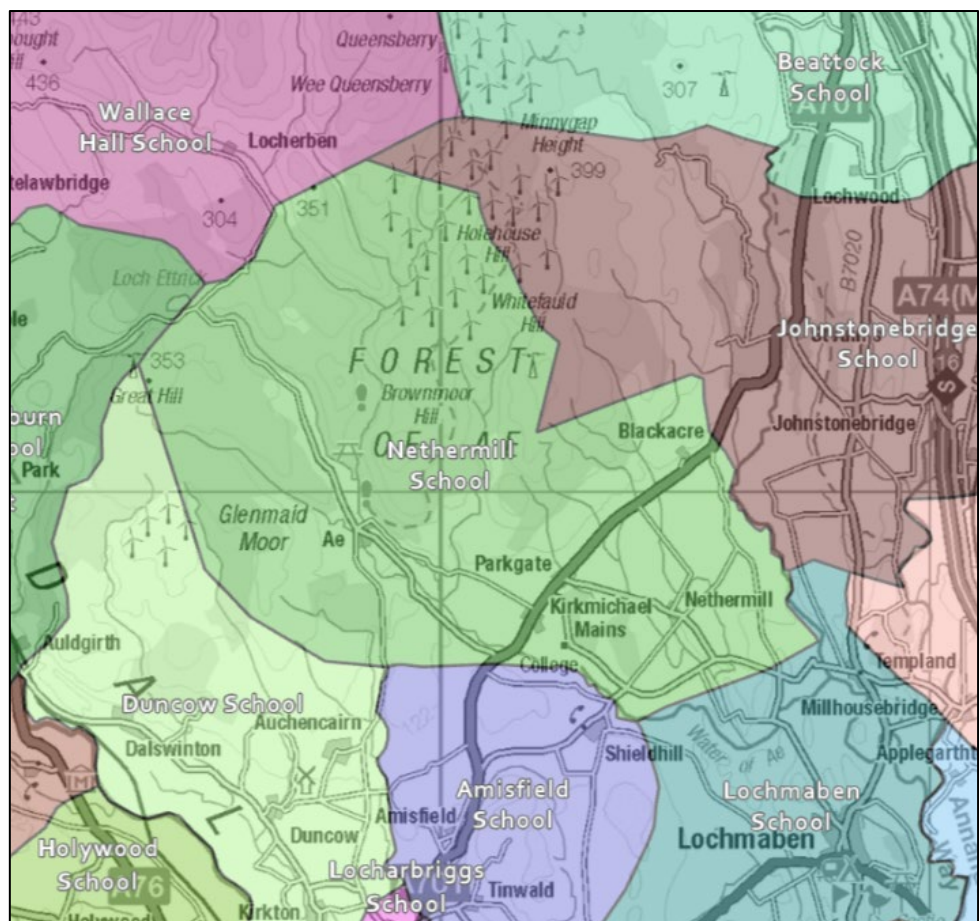


Figure 2 – Proposed realigned catchment area of Nethermill Primary School

2.1 Reasons for this Proposal

This is considered to be the most appropriate option to address the reasons for the proposal, which are:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggest that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

2.2 Additional Considerations

In addition to the main reasons outlined above, the following considerations have also informed the proposal to discontinue education provision at Ae Primary School:

- The educational benefits, as set out in Section 8, to current and future primary-aged children within the Ae Primary School catchment area.
- Councils have a statutory duty, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, to make arrangements to secure 'best-value'.
- On 30 November 2023, Elected Members approved the 10 School Model Principles to be used as a basis for a sustainable school estate. Applying these principles will help ensure best-value and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all children and young people, while considering the needs and wishes of people and communities. These principles are detailed in the Preliminary Requirements document at Appendix 3.
- Dumfries and Galloway Council currently has in excess of 4,613 (33%) spaces within its current primary school estate (correct as academic year 2025/26). It must be acknowledged that the costs-per-pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high and that underutilised schools are expensive to maintain and operate. The current condition, suitability and over capacity is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the school estate.

3.0 Preliminary Requirements

In accordance with Section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act, Dumfries and Galloway Council is required to satisfy specific preliminary requirements before proposing the closure of a rural school. These requirements uphold the presumption against closure and ensure that any proposal is only brought forward following careful

consideration of alternatives and meaningful engagement with the affected community.

Ae Primary School is classified as an accessible rural school. Following a projected enrolment of only 2 pupils for the 2026/27 academic year and a period of temporary closure; in line with statutory guidance, Dumfries and Galloway Council undertook a structured engagement process to explore the future of the school and assess whether closure was the most appropriate response.

Dumfries and Galloway Council identified the reasons for this proposal, including:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggest that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

Through community engagement, including two drop-in sessions and a stakeholder survey, Dumfries and Galloway Council considered reasonable alternatives to closure and assessed the likely educational benefits, community impact, and travel implications of each option. Three options (including closure) were presented to the local community by Dumfries and Galloway Council for consideration during the pre-consultation phase, as required by Section 12A of the 2010 Act. Stakeholders were invited to propose their own reasonable alternatives to closure and a further three alternatives were proposed.

Dumfries and Galloway Council assessed the educational impact of each option. Reopening the school would have resulted in a single-teacher, multi-composite class with limited peer interaction and curriculum breadth. Continued temporary closure offered no long-term certainty and risked disengagement. By contrast, Nethermill Primary School offered a well-resourced learning environment with broader social and educational opportunities, aligned with Dumfries and Galloway Council's statutory duties under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000.

Ae Primary School is the only community facility in Ae Village and continues to play an important role in supporting community activity through its current use by Ae Community Council. Consultation respondents highlighted the building's value as a hub for social interaction and community cohesion and expressed concern that its closure could negatively affect the sustainability of the village, particularly given the absence of alternative facilities. However, despite the school's temporary closure, catchment pupil numbers have continued to increase. Should closure proceed, opportunities may exist for the community to retain use of the building through community asset transfer arrangements.

Travel arrangements were reviewed. Six pupils in the Ae Primary School catchment area are currently accessing school transport to Nethermill Primary School in a single vehicle under Dumfries and Galloway Council's School Transport Policy. This resulted in a modest increase in transport costs but was considered manageable and environmentally neutral.

Having satisfied the preliminary requirements and assessed all relevant factors, Dumfries and Galloway Council concluded that the permanent closure of Ae Primary School and realignment of its catchment to Nethermill Primary School was the most appropriate response. This recommendation was presented to the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee for approval to commence the Statutory Consultation process.

3.1 Alternatives to the Proposal

During the pre-consultation phase, Dumfries and Galloway Council invited stakeholders to consider and comment on two reasonable alternatives to closure plus closure, as required under Section 12A of the 2010 Act. These options were discussed at two public drop-ins on Tuesday 5 May and Friday 8 May 2026, feedback was gathered through a public survey that closed on Friday 22nd May 2026.

The three options were:

- 1. Status Quo (Continuation of Temporary Closure (previously known as 'Mothballing'))** – No change to the current school arrangements at Ae Primary School, with the expectation that pupil numbers will increase sufficiently to allow the school to reopen.
- 2. Closure** – This would involve a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ae Primary School and realign the catchment area. (This was included for completeness at the drop-in sessions and online survey to enable stakeholders to comment. As closure is the proposal itself (rather than an alternative to it), it is not examined as a reasonable alternatives but is fully assessed later in this report).
- 3. Reopening of the School** – Ae Primary School would be reopened.

Alternative proposals suggested at the Drop-In Sessions or Online Survey

In accordance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, which requires the authority to consider only reasonable and viable alternatives to closure, the following option were discounted as 'unreasonable' and were therefore not included in the assessment of reasonable alternatives.

- 4. Dedicated ASN Provision** – A specialist facility at Ae Primary School supporting pupils with additional support needs.

- 5. Shared Council/Community Facility** – A shared facility between the school and the community with split costs.
- 6. Outdoor Education Facility** – The building could be used as a base for outdoor learning activities.

Members of the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 30 June 2026 were presented with the finding from the preliminary requirements phase and agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of Ae Primary School. The Preliminary Requirements document, which is attached as Appendix 3.

4.0 School Roll/Changing Demographics

Demographic trends and pupil numbers were key considerations in the Preliminary Requirements process, as detailed in Section 3.5 and 3.6 of Appendix 4. These factors have informed Dumfries and Galloway Council's assessment of the long-term sustainability of Ae Primary School.

The data presented below is drawn from the annual pupil census, conducted each September. Historical school roll figures reflect past census data, while future projections are based on NHS birth data and local development forecasts. It is important to note that school rolls may fluctuate due to families moving in or out of the catchment area and parents/carers exercising their right to submit placing requests.

4.1 Demographics of Dumfries and Galloway

Scotland's population is projected to age. The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 300,700 over the 25 years to mid-2049. Meanwhile, the number of children (aged 0 to 15) and young adults (aged 16 to 29) are both projected to fall over the same period, by 165,900 and 157,500 respectively. These projections are lower than the last set of projections for Scotland. (Source: National Records of Scotland).

Dumfries and Galloway is also experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers. The Council holds electronic records of school rolls back to academic year 1975/76. The historical pupil rolls for Primary Schools in Dumfries and Galloway and Ae Primary School are detailed in Figures 3 and 4 below.

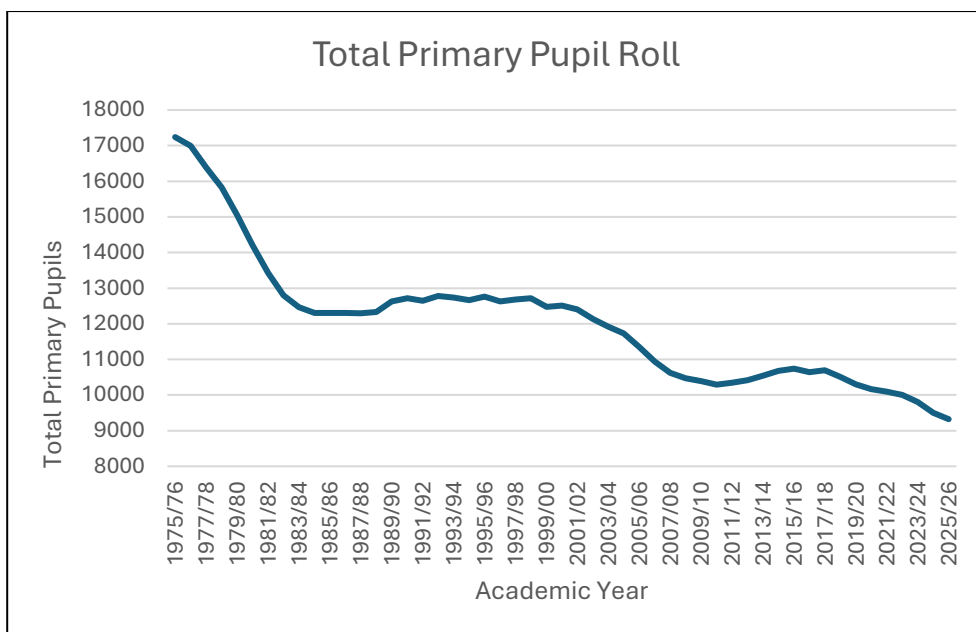


Figure 3: Dumfries and Galloway Total Primary Pupil Roll

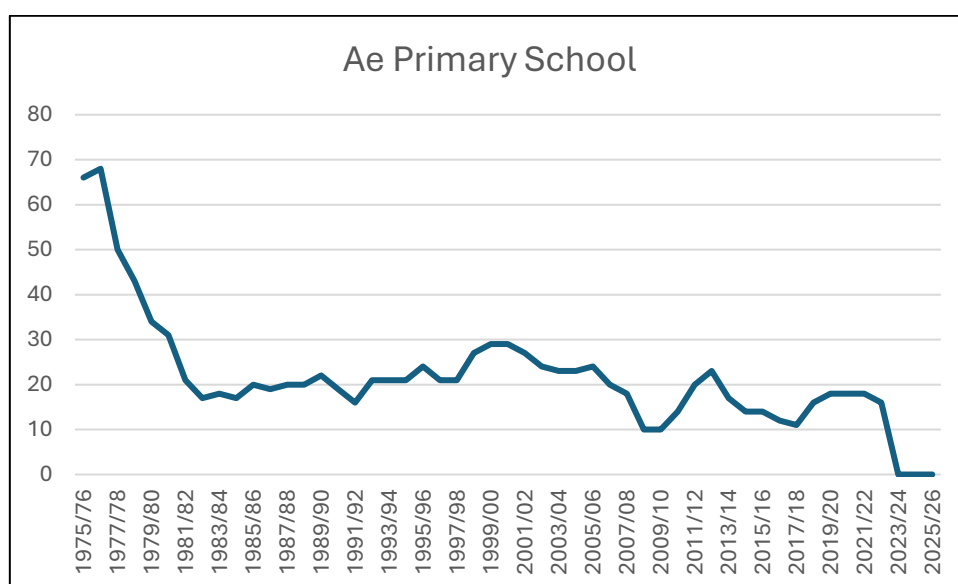


Figure 4: Ae Primary Historic Pupil Roll

4.2 School Roll – Ae Primary School

In line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance, there must be an annual review to establish the desire of families living in the catchment area to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School. Information regarding this process and links to the relevant committees are detailed in Section 1.0 Introduction. There has been to date very few families wishing to enrol or transfer their children, for academic years 2023/24 through to 2025/26 there were no enrolment or transfer requests, this breakdown is displayed in the table below:

Year	Total Pupils
2023/24	0
2024/25	0
2025/26	0
2026/27	2*

Figure 5: Pupil Enrolments

**Both the enrolments received for academic year 2026/27 were for Primary 1, these families have been supported in securing alternative Primary 1 places. All families living within the Ae Primary School catchment area have catchment status for Nethermill Primary School and priority over places in line with the Schools Admission Policy, should this be their preferred choice of school, all other requests for alternative schools are placing requests and are managed in line with policy.*

There are currently 20 children of P1-P7 age (academic year 2025/26) residing within the catchment area of Ae Primary School (SEEMiS data May 2026). The catchment children are detailed in figure 6 below. These children of primary school age all attend other schools in the area, some as a result of the temporary closure of Ae Primary School, others through parental choice. The catchment pupils attend nine different primary schools in the region, the greatest number of which (7) being at Nethermill Primary School.

Academic Year	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2025/26	1	3	7	1	7	1	4	2	4	1	20
2026/27				7	1	7	1	4	2	4	26
2027/28				3	7	1	7	1	4	2	25
2028/29				1	3	7	1	7	1	4	24

Figure 6: Pupil Projections

If all current catchment pupils were to attend Ae Primary School for academic year 2026/27, the utilisation of the school would be 52% (26 pupils). This utilisation rate is below the desired occupancy levels as described in School Model Principle 7 where schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% utilisation of the capacity of the school and ideally should be operating at 80% and assumes all pupils would attend.

During the period of temporary closure, the number of pupils living in the Ae Primary School catchment area has increased. Figure 7 below details the number of catchment pupils back to academic year 2017/18, with the anticipated catchment pupils for future

years marked in green. The red line denotes the point at which the school temporarily closed.

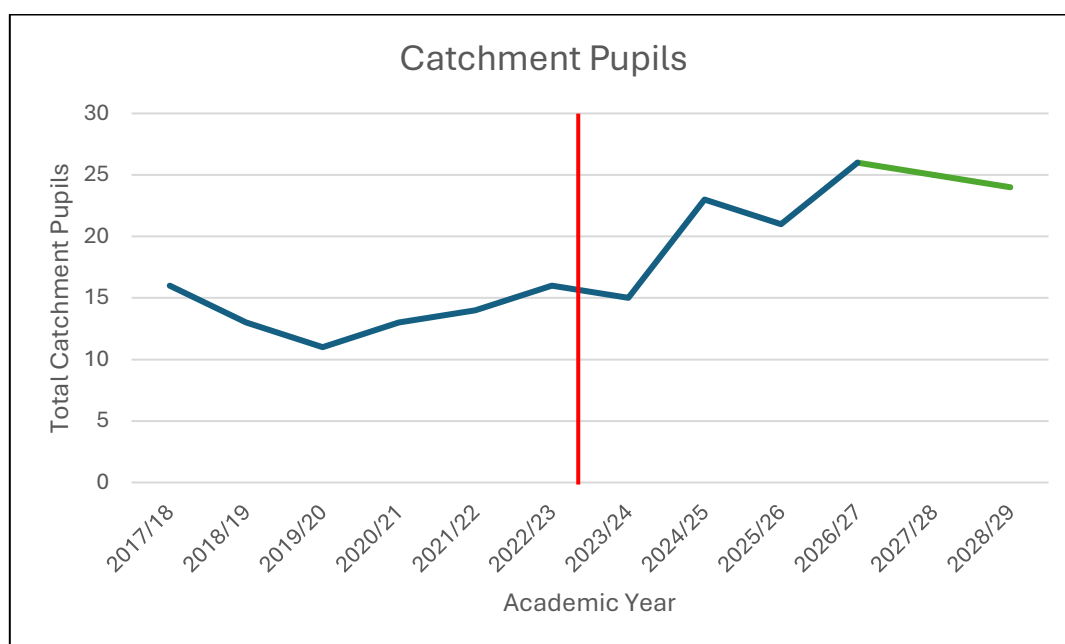


Figure 7: Catchment Pupils

As of May 2026, there were 26 primary-aged children residing within the Ae Primary School catchment area for academic year 2026/27. However, only two of these children expressed an interest in attending Ae Primary School. The school's utilisation rate would be just 4%, based on a capacity of 50 pupils. The catchment pupils attend nine different primary schools in the region during academic year 2025/26, the greatest number of which (7) being at Nethermill Primary School.

These figure of 4% falls significantly below Dumfries and Galloway Council's target occupancy rate of 60 to 80%, as outlined in the School Model Principles. The sustained low enrolment numbers, combined with broader demographic trends - including a projected 18.2% reduction in the 0 to 15 age group across Dumfries and Galloway by 2032 - suggests that the school is unlikely to return to viable operating levels in the foreseeable future despite an increase in primary aged pupils living in the catchment area as detailed in Figure 7 above.

The pupil roll forecast for Ae Primary School is shown in Figure 6 (not adjusted for catchment uptake). These projections are based on the number of primary and nursery aged children living in the catchment area, they include anticipated catchment figures derived from NHS birth data. It should be noted that school roll figures may fluctuate due to changes in residency within the catchment area.

4.3 School Roll – Nethermill Primary School

Nethermill Primary School is designated as an accessible rural school under the Scottish Government's Rural Schools List. The school comprises two classrooms and operates with two composite classes, providing accommodation for up to 47 pupils.

The school benefited from refurbishment works completed during the 2018/19 financial year.

The Learning Estate Strategy highlights the importance of operating schools at approximately 80% utilisation to ensure efficient use of resources. Based on a school roll of 25 pupils for academic session 2026/27, Nethermill Primary School is operating at 53% utilisation. However, if all pupils residing within a realigned catchment area attended Nethermill Primary School, utilisation would increase to 94%, equating to 44 pupils.

Nethermill Primary School has a total capacity of 47 pupils. Should the catchment area of Ae Primary School be realigned to Nethermill Primary School, the projected number of catchment pupils over the next three academic years is shown in Figure 8 below:

Academic Year	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2026/27	10	6	7	4	5	5	7	44
2027/28	4	10	6	7	4	5	5	41
2028/29	1	4	10	6	7	4	5	37

Figure 8: Catchment Pupils

The school roll for the current academic year (2025/26) and projections are detailed in Figure 9 below:

Academic Year	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2026/27	1	3	5	3	3	2	5	5	2	25
2027/28			3	5	3	3	2	5	5	26
2028/29			1	3	5	3	3	2	5	22

Figure 9: Nethermill P.S Pupil Projections

Please note that the N4 and N5 projections include pupils residing within the current Ae Primary School catchment area.

4.4 Secondary School Entitlement

Ae Primary School catchment pupils are currently within the catchment area of Dumfries High School for secondary education. Under the proposal to close Ae Primary School and realign its catchment area to Nethermill Primary School, the associated secondary school catchment would also change. As a result, pupils residing within the current Ae Primary School catchment area would become catchment pupils for Lockerbie Academy rather than Dumfries High School.

Parents who attended the drop-in sessions held as part of the preliminary requirements phase expressed a preference for their children to transition from Nethermill Primary School to Lockerbie Academy, enabling them to continue their secondary education alongside their primary school peers.

Under this proposal, pupils from the current Ae Primary School catchment area who are already attending Dumfries High School would retain their existing entitlement to home-to-school transport. This entitlement would also continue to apply to any younger siblings who subsequently attend Dumfries High School, ensuring that no existing transport arrangements are withdrawn as a result of the proposal.

Should the proposal be approved, pupils from the Ae Primary School catchment area who choose to attend Lockerbie Academy onwards would become entitled to home-to-school transport in line with the revised secondary school catchment arrangements from 23 April 2027.

4.5 Housing Development

Dumfries and Galloway Council's second Local Development Plan 2019 (LDP2) is the key planning document that sets out how land and property should be used across the region, guiding decisions on future development. It identifies where different types of development, including housing, businesses, community facilities and infrastructure, may take place and provides the policy framework against which all planning applications are assessed. Adopted in October 2019, LDP2 plays a central role in shaping long-term growth, protecting the environment and supporting sustainable communities.

LDP2 does not identify any sites within Ae Village or the wider catchment area for housing development. The LDP2 Housing Development in Villages (Supplementary Guidance – February 2020) covers Ae Village.

https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/Housing_Development_in_Villages_SG_LDP2_Adopted.pdf

The document states;

Policy H2: Housing Development in Villages The Council will support housing development proposals in villages, subject to other policies in the plan where:

- *the number of units proposed relates to the scale and size of the existing village; and*
- *it does not on its own or in combination with other developments in the housing market area undermine the overall objective of the spatial strategy; and*
- *it relates to the layout, density and design of the character and form of the existing village; and*
- *it would not lead to ribbon development; and*
- *the proposal would not result in the loss of open space shown in the Open Space Supplementary Guidance.*

Any development particularly within Ae Primary School catchment area would need to meet the requirements of the bullet points as detailed above.

5.0 Teacher Numbers

Teacher numbers have remained relatively stable at the national level, with a 1% decrease in the number of teachers across Scotland between 2021 and 2025. In Dumfries and Galloway, however, there has been a 2% reduction in the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of teachers between 2021 and 2025.

If the proposal to close Ae Primary School is accepted, there would be no impact on staffing levels at Nethermill Primary School.

6.0 Condition and Suitability of the Building

Information relating to the Extent, Condition, Sufficiency and Suitability of the school estate is reported by Dumfries and Galloway Council to the Scottish Government on an annual basis - this is known as the Core Facts Return. Suitability is a measure of whether a school building and its grounds are fit for the purpose of delivering the education curriculum. The suitability of Ae Primary School was carried out in February 2022, and the school was graded as A (Good) under the Core Facts guidance, meaning it is performing well overall and operating effectively.

Condition is concerned with the current state of the fabric of the school and with safety and security, it is undertaken by external surveyors impartial to Dumfries and Galloway Council and follows scoring methodology defined by Scottish Government for all schools. Ae Primary School was assessed in September 2021, the current overall condition rating across the building is A, classified *“Performing well and operating effectively (physical element carries out function totally as new including consideration of the transverse elements)”* (Scottish Government – The Condition Core Fact).

7.0 Factors for Rural School Closures

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 makes special provisions for rural schools, establishing a procedural presumption against closure. This requires education authorities to follow a more detailed set of procedures when formulating, consulting on, and deciding whether to implement a rural school closure proposal.

Ae Primary School is classified as a accessible rural school. Under the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Dumfries and Galloway Council is required to assess the likely effects of closure in relation to the following three statutory factors:

- The likely educational benefits
- The likely effect on the local community (assessed in accordance with Section 12(4))
- The likely effects of different travel arrangements (assessed in accordance with Section 12(5))

These factors are addressed in further detail in Sections 8 to 10 of this Proposal Paper.

8.0 Educational Benefits Statement

The 2010 Act reflects the Scottish Ministers' view that educational benefits should be at the heart of any proposal to make a significant change to schools. Consequently, the Act specifies that the local authority must, for all consultations, prepare an Educational Benefits Statement and publish it within the proposal paper. The Act requires authorities to consider current and future pupils of any affected school, current users of its facilities, and the pupils of other schools in the authority's area. It must also explain how the authority intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects of the proposal.

Should this proposal be implemented, the Council believes that there will be considerable educational benefits. These centre around:

- Learning and teaching;
- Educational Outcomes;
- Experiences and opportunities
- The environment for learning.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It recognises the professionalism of Head Teachers and their teams and allows them the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their young learners need to adapt, think critically and flourish in an ever-changing global society. Individual Head Teachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners and one which reflects the uniqueness of their local community and their context.

Ae and Nethermill Primary Schools are both accessible rural schools (Scottish Government classification) and within eleven miles of their local secondary schools, Dumfries High School and Lockerbie Academy respectively. Children from Ae Primary, attending Nethermill Primary continue to benefit from a curriculum design which supports their rural location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs and rural context. Outdoor learning is a key feature of curricular design at Nethermill Primary School.

Pupils from Ae Primary who are currently attending Nethermill are benefitting from learning with and alongside a greater number of peers of the same age and stage as themselves. These larger numbers allow pupils to benefit from increased friendship groups and to develop their social skills through building relationships. These relationships help them to become 'Confident Individuals' and Responsible Citizens' by allowing them to overcome the challenges and exercise responsibilities as a member of a larger social group, within a supportive educational environment. They are able to work as part of a team, take part in team activities, exercise their responsibilities and have their voice heard on a range of school-based committees. The establishment of a larger friendship group can also support their transition to secondary school.

8.1 Learning and Teaching

The following focuses on learning and teaching and the curriculum at Nethermill Primary School. Children from Ae Primary School catchment area currently attend Nethermill Primary through parental choice. Nethermill Primary School would be the future receiving schools for pupils currently living within the Ae Primary catchment area. Nethermill Primary School is partnered with Applegarth Primary School and both schools have shared management arrangements. Children would transition from there to Lockerbie Academy at the end of their Primary education.

The curriculum at Nethermill Primary School includes a broad range of planned experiences that allow all young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

In Nethermill Primary School children are encouraged to lead their learning and be active participants who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and engaged in the life of the school. The views of young people are actively sought and acted upon. Pupils play a genuine part in school improvement and change. Learning is planned within the four contexts of learning – curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school and opportunities for personal achievement. This planning supports young people to achieve their full potential, whilst providing them with a wide range of experiences and opportunities.

In Nethermill Primary School pupils are divided into two multi-composite classes where children are with peers from more than one year group. Children benefit from being part of a social context in which they can build relationships, develop resilience and skills for life, learning and work. They are able to collaborate with peers in a variety of situations and learning activities, which allow them to exercise responsibility. They are provided with opportunities to work as part of a team and to represent their school at local, regional and national events.

The National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education sets out the expectation and priorities for the education system to raise attainment for all and to close the attainment gap between the most and least advantaged children. Schools must deliver this improvement within the principles and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence, a curriculum for Scotland.

The principles of Curriculum for Excellence acknowledge the unique contexts in which all our schools sit and allows Head Teachers and their teams the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that meets the needs of their learners and communities. Head Teachers and their teams are empowered to exercise their professionalism and autonomy to create an innovative curriculum within the broader guidance of CfE. The Head Teacher (currently Acting Head Teacher) of Nethermill Primary School supports their staff through an annual Professional Review and Development process. This in turn leads into professional development opportunities which support effective school improvement and pupil outcomes. The school team works together to support and challenge their professional thinking. Nethermill Primary School sits within Lockerbie

Academy cluster, alongside nine other primary schools. This cluster arrangement provides an opportunity for staff to plan and work together on improvement priorities with stage partners, across stages and indeed sectors. They support effective moderation and positively affect learning and teaching, effective transitions, pupil progression pathways and positive, sustained destinations.

Nethermill Primary School has achieved its silver Rights Respecting Schools accreditation and are working towards gold. This award recognises the schools strong progress in embedding children's rights throughout its policies, practice and culture. It reflects a commitment to creating a learning environment where respect, participation, equality and wellbeing are at the heart of school life. Through the school improvement planning process, Nethermill Primary is focusing on improving pupil's skills in writing in order to raise attainment. Staff are also working together to ensure a consistent approach to high-quality learning and teaching across the school, the partnership and wider cluster.

Nethermill Primary School has developed its curriculum to include outdoor learning and learning through play. They have engaged with Local Authority Principal Teachers of Play to incorporate play as a tool to support their pupil's cognitive development and help them to gain a better understanding of concepts which enhance their wider growth. Through their programmes of outdoor learning, they are enhancing their pupil's health and wellbeing, wider achievements and personal developments. Outdoor learning is allowing their pupils to make connections across the curriculum and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in meaningful contexts. Using the outdoors as a stimulus provides opportunities for critical thinking, enquiry, challenge and reflection as well as boosting self-esteem, self-confidence and respect for each other and the natural environment.

Nethermill Primary School is situated eight miles outside of Lockerbie and is classed as an accessible rural school. The school is partnered with Applegarth Primary School and has shared management arrangements. At the moment, the school has an Acting Head Teacher in place. The Acting Head Teacher is engaging with parents, carers and community partners to develop a robust understanding of their context.

Pupils at Nethermill Primary come from a variety of Local Authority and private childcare providers. The school laisses closely with these partners to ensure a smooth transition for its pupils. School staff work closely with their secondary colleagues to ensure a smooth transition into secondary education for its young people.

8.2 Educational Outcomes

Teachers at Nethermill Primary School plan, assess and track pupil progress in order to ensure that every child has the challenge, support and opportunity to reach their full potential. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a key priority for the whole staff team. Professional discussions, classroom observations, peer collaboration, learning conversations, moderation and careful tracking of attainment progress as well as

wellbeing and wider achievement ensures appropriate interventions and support can be harnessed when a child needs it. This support, alongside close working with parents and carers, helps to ensure the needs of every young person are met.

The number of pupils at each stage in Nethermill Primary School is relatively low which makes for comparison of year-on-year data difficult. However, they have a consistently strong picture of pupils making good individual progress from their prior levels of learning.

Rights Respecting Schools and Nurture are a key focus at the school. This focused approach has supported the development of positive relationships across the whole school community. The larger number of staff and parent/carer body, alongside a greater number of community partners, naturally gives the school an increased breadth of talent, interests and opportunities to harness and share. This applies in terms of the wider curriculum opportunities afforded to young people, as well as the enhancement by staff individual expertise, such as Outdoor Learning.

8.3 Learner Experiences – Broadening the Range of Opportunities

Children at Nethermill Primary School are afforded a wide range of planned activities and experiences which allow them to develop their knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes. These in turn, support their physical, social and emotional wellbeing for both now and in the future. This, combined with strong community links, allows young people to develop skills for learning life and work and supports positive learning pathways.

Nethermill Primary School is one of several schools that feed into Lockerbie Academy. Cluster working has afforded opportunities for clear transition planning and events, which in turn provides further opportunities for pupils to make new connections and to ensure appropriate support at each step of their educational journey.

Children at Nethermill Primary School are provided with a variety of experiences that develop their self-management, social intelligence and innovation skills.

Across the school, children are becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. They are engaged in their learning and contribute well during lessons and wider school activities. Positive relationships at all levels are evident within the ethos of the school. Children enjoy good relationships with their peers and feel supported when things are not going as well. Pupils feel that they are listened to and that they have an active voice that can enact change.

8.4 Environment for Learning

Nethermill Primary School is situated between the villages of Nethermill and Parkgate, Dumfries and Galloway. Education has been provided at the school since the 19th century, and renovations have been carried out in more recent years. The school now

provides education in both traditional and modern spaces. The school has a very large, well equipped and utilised outdoor area as well as access to woodland. The school is accessible for pupils and visitors with special access needs.

Children attending Nethermill Primary School from Ae Primary are able to maintain links with children who live in their own village and surrounding area, as well as creating friendships across the wider Nethermill catchment area. These relationships extend beyond the school day to activities and clubs taking place in the wider Dumfries and Lockerbie areas. The positive relationships developed supports and enhances experiences and learning in school.

To summarise, were the closure of Ae Primary School to be implemented, there would be a wide range of educational benefits for pupils, as identified in the paragraphs above. These benefits would range from the children receiving a more diverse curriculum and wider range of high-quality learning experiences, to the development of self-management, social intelligence and innovation skills. The learning environment at Nethermill Primary School would offer pupils the opportunity to experience the broader life of the school, through a wider range of committees and community links, to be involved in project based and interdisciplinary learning within and across stages, as well as wider opportunities for personal achievement and involvement.

8.5 Assessment of likely educational benefits on other users of the school's facilities - Implications for staff

Should this proposal be implemented, there will be no new implications for teaching and ancillary staff at either Nethermill Primary School.

Should this proposal be implemented the Council does not envisage any adverse effects from the proposal in respect of staffing. Should any arise, these would be dealt with in line with Council policy.

The benefits for staff from Ae Primary School would be the inclusion as part of a larger team. They would have colleagues to work alongside share professional ideas, support and challenge. Effective collaboration of staff can support moderation, better meet pupil needs, enhance professional development and improve learning and teaching. Staff can feel more supported when they are working as part of a larger team and professional learning community.

8.6 Implications for Early Learning and Childcare

Ae Primary School and Nethermill Primary School do not have ELC provision within the schools. Therefore, pre-five children attend other local authority and private providers across the local area. As a result, there would be no change to the current arrangements for pre-five children across the Ae catchment area in relation to ELCC provision. Nethermill Primary School has positive relationships with ELCC providers and transition is strong.

8.7 Educational benefits for any future children who would be likely to enrol at Ae Primary School (but for implementation).

Children who may live in the Ae Primary School catchment area in the future will benefit from the wide range of educational experiences and opportunities outlined above.

Through the proposal the roll of Nethermill Primary School could increase, depending on parental choice of receiving school. This would be particularly beneficial for this small Primary School, as it would extend the peer group for all pupils both now and in the future. This in turn would support a wider range of social interactions, extra-curricular activities, clubs and committees, as well as greater diversity in its pupil body.

Pupils who would have otherwise attended Ae Primary School, would benefit from the improved educational experience as outlined above. They would also benefit from daily interactions with a large number of peers and wider range of shared experiences and opportunities for friendships. This in turn will support a successful transition into secondary education and provide greater opportunity to develop and sustain friendships.

8.8 Educational benefits likely for pupils in any other school in the Local Authority.

The current temporary closure of Ae Primary School has an indirect positive effect on pupils across Dumfries and Galloway. The reduction in running costs of the school effectively means a saving to the Council. If Ae Primary School were to remain closed, the current costs would be redirected back into the Council. As a result, they would indirectly benefit the wider pupil body across Dumfries and Galloway.

There would be no other significant impacts, positive or negative, from this proposal on pupils within the local authority who attend other schools.

8.9 Placing Requests

In line with the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the proposal for the closure of Ae Primary School would not affect the rights of parents and carers to request that their child attend a school of their choice, rather than the designated school in whose catchment area the family lives.

8.10 Consideration of how to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the implementation of this proposal

The village of Ae sits approximately five miles from Nethermill Primary School. School transport would continue to be provided for pupils living in Ae village that are entitled in line with the Schools Transport Policy, should this proposal be implemented.

8.11 Educational Benefits Statement Summary

The ability of pupils from Ae Primary School attending Nethermill Primary School as a consequence of this proposal, to participate in a wider range of educational experiences and opportunities is of significant educational benefit. The broader, more diverse pupil body would allow for greater social and emotional development and opportunities to create friendships.

The educational benefits of children attending Nethermill Primary School from Ae Primary are numerous and wide ranging. There has been no negative effect identified. However, they will have to travel by funded school transport to Nethermill Primary School due to the rural nature of the school. It is considered that the positive impacts of this proposal outweigh the negative aspect of travel.

9.0 Community Impact

Ae Village currently has no public facilities or village hall, with Ae Primary School providing the only venue available for community use. In 2019/20, capital investment was undertaken to adapt the school building to support secure community access and improve the efficiency of shared use. Following the temporary closure of the school in 2023, a Licence to Occupy for the entire building and grounds was granted to Ae Community Council in recognition of the absence of alternative community facilities within the locality. The current licence is due to expire in September 2026.

Throughout the consultation process, stakeholders consistently highlighted the importance of the school building as a focal point for community life. Responses received through drop-in sessions and the online survey emphasised that the building supports social interaction, community events and intergenerational activities, and plays an important role in maintaining community identity and cohesion.

Closure of the school would represent a significant change for the community. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the loss of the building as a community hub could reduce opportunities for engagement, increase social isolation and contribute to a decline in community sustainability. Concerns were also raised regarding the loss of local employment and the absence of any alternative venue capable of accommodating community activities.

Stakeholders raised concerns that the closure of Ae Primary School could negatively affect perceptions of the village's long-term sustainability and identity. Some respondents felt this could influence future decisions made by families regarding living in the area and enrolling children in local schools. Contrary to this, the number of catchment pupils, as shown in Figure 7 (Section 4.2), has continued to increase despite the temporary closure of the school. While the number of children living within the catchment area has increased, this has not translated into increased demand for Ae Primary School. No enrolment or transfer requests were received between 2023/24 and 2025/26, and only two Primary 1 enrolments were received for 2026/27, indicating that families continue to choose alternative schools.

Given the lack of alternative community facilities within Ae Village, it is recognised that the formal closure of Ae Primary School could have a negative impact on the wider community

However, should closure proceed, opportunities may exist for the community to explore alternative uses for the building through available community asset transfer processes, potentially enabling the facility to continue supporting local priorities and community aspirations in a different capacity.

10.0 The likely effect caused by any different travel arrangements

The distance between Ae Primary School and surrounding primary schools sourced from Google Maps are listed below:

Amisfield Primary School	6 miles
Closeburn Primary School	8.5 miles
Duncow Primary School	5.3 miles
Johnstonebridge Primary School	11.0 miles
Nethermill Primary School	4.9 miles
Wallace Hall Primary School	11.4 miles

It is important to note that the geography of the catchment area means that travel distances/times will be different for all pupils, which is why the information listed above is from Ae Primary School to surrounding schools. The additional travel distance from Ae Primary School to Nethermill Primary School is 4.9miles. A small number of properties within the current Ae Primary School catchment area will have shorter travel distances to Nethermill Primary School than Ae Primary School.

Overall, while the closure of Ae Primary School would result in longer travel distances for some pupils, the arrangements fall within acceptable thresholds outlined in the School Model Principles. The provision of transport mitigates potential barriers to access, and the proximity of Nethermill Primary School ensures continuity of education without undue disruption.

For academic year 2025/26, six pupils in the Ae Primary School catchment area are currently accessing school transport to Nethermill Primary School in a single vehicle under Dumfries and Galloway Council's School Transport Policy. This resulted in a modest increase in transport costs but was considered manageable and environmentally neutral.

11.0 Financial Impact

In line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010: technical guide and financial template, a comprehensive financial analysis is provided in Appendix 1, outlining the estimated costs associated with maintaining Ae Primary School as a fully operational and occupied facility. These figures are based on the 2022/23 financial year, which represents the last full year of active use prior to the school being temporarily closed.

Column 2 of Table 1 at Appendix 1 shows the annual running costs of Ae Primary School (from on financial year 2022/23 actuals) whilst Column 3 shows the additional impact on Nethermill Primary School as the receiving school. The annual recurring savings (or costs) are shown in Column 4.

In the 2022/23 academic year, the cost per pupil at Ae Primary School was £12,511 based on a school roll of 16 pupils (census figure September 2022). This figure is based on an operational cost for that year of £200,183.

Table 1, School Costs. There are no figures included for column 3 as the receiving school did not require any additional staffing to accommodate the pupils from Ae Primary School. All staff employed by Dumfries and Galloway Council at the time Ae Primary School temporarily closed Any staffing were redeployed in line with Dumfries and Galloway Council's policies and included as part of the annual workforce planning exercise.

Table 1, Building Costs. There are no figures included for column 3 as the receiving school does not require any additional accommodation for the incoming pupils – the small number of additional pupils living in the Ae Primary School catchment area can be accommodated in the existing number of classbases. Property insurance is set at zero throughout the financial template, as all Dumfries and Galloway Council properties are insured under a collective policy. As such, no individual insurance costs are attributed to specific properties. The non-domestic rates is detailed as £2,100, however from April 2023 the reassessed rate was £8,800. Table 3 details the current non-domestic rate as £2,600 this is a ground rate that has been applied whilst the school is temporarily closed. Should the school reopen, the non-domestic rate would be £8,800.

Table 1, School Operational Costs. The roll of Nethermill Primary School for academic year 2022/23 had decreased, even with the addition of pupils from the Ae Primary School catchment area. As a result, the school's Devolved School Management (DSM) budget has been adjusted to reflect new arrangements and actual pupil roll in line with Dumfries and Galloway Council's funding formula and is a redistribution of funding rather than an additional cost. There are no additional costs associated with school catering.

Table 1, Transport Costs. The additional costs associated with transporting six pupils in one taxi for the full academic year 2025/26 was £31,350. It is anticipated that additional costs may arise as a result of the revised secondary school transport entitlement. In the short term, these costs are likely to be higher due to the continuation of transport arrangements for pupils and eligible siblings who retain a legacy entitlement to attend Dumfries High School. However, these additional costs are expected to reduce over time and ultimately be removed as those pupils complete their education and leave Dumfries High School, with transport provision thereafter aligned solely to the revised catchment arrangements for Lockerbie Academy. No figures have been included within the financial template at this stage, as the potential costs associated with revised secondary school transport arrangements are currently unknown and cannot be quantified with certainty. However, it is recognised that there is currently one secondary-aged pupil from the existing Ae Primary School catchment

area attending Dumfries High School and one secondary-aged pupil attending Lockerbie Academy. As future parental choices and transport requirements cannot be accurately predicted at this stage, it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate of any additional transport costs that may arise. Furthermore, any such costs would relate to secondary school transport provision and are therefore not directly attributable to the receiving school, Nethermill Primary School.

Table 3, Annual Property Costs, as detailed above non-domestic rate is currently £2,600 this is a ground rate that has been applied whilst the school is temporarily closed. As detailed in Section 1, Members of Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee on 8 February 2024 agreed to grant a two-year Licence to Occupy Ae Primary School and land to Ae Community Council. As a result of this license to occupy, there are increased energy costs associated with the building due to the current community usage.

Table 5 in Appendix 1 details the impact on Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE). As detailed in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010: technical guide and financial template, there are four GAE lines that can be impacted as a result of school closure. In this context, no GAE funding will be lost for pupils who attend Nethermill Primary School, as the school qualifies as a rural establishments with fewer than 70 pupils.

The financial impact of closing Ae Primary School has been assessed across key areas including operational costs, staffing, transport, and funding. Analysis of 2022/23 data highlights high per-pupil costs indicating that continued operation is not financially sustainable. The expected annual recurring saving is £169,538, with minimal temporary closure costs and potential for future asset disposal. Dumfries and Galloway Council will see no reduction in Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) for pupils now attending Nethermill Primary School. Overall, the proposal supports a cost-effective and sustainable approach in line with Dumfries and Galloway Council policy.

12.0 Impact Assessment

Dumfries and Galloway Council will undertake an impact assessment and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) during the consultation process in respect of this proposal, to ensure that due regard is given to whether the decisions we make are likely to impact on different groups of people across the region. The result of the impact assessment should highlight any barriers or discrimination that might affect the communities of Ae Primary School, ensuring we meet our statutory duties under the Equality Act including the Fairer Scotland Duty.

Impact assessment screening documents were completed for each option as part of the preliminary requirements phase; to provide a consistent and structured evaluation of potential impacts, these are included in Appendix 3.

13.0 Preliminary Requirements

Prior to formulating a rural school closure proposal under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Education Authority must satisfy the preliminary requirements

set out in Section 12A of the 2010 Act. Dumfries and Galloway Council has previously identified its reasons for formulating a possible proposal, has considered whether there were any reasonable alternatives to the possible proposal as a response to those reasons, and has assessed each of the options in accordance with Section 12A(2)(c) of the 2010 Act. After considering a paper addressing these preliminary requirements on 30 June 2026, Members of the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee agreed to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of Ae Primary School in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

No decision will be taken by Dumfries and Galloway Council on the proposal contained in this paper until after the end of the consultation period. Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee will then receive a report on the consultation and will reach a view on the proposal.

14.0 Consultees

A summary of this document will be issued free of charge to all of the consultees listed at page 3 of this document and it will also be published on Dumfries and Galloway Council's website: <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/consultations-engagements?page=1>

15.0 Consultation Period

As part of the consultation process, the Education Authority must publish the proposal paper, advertise it, and notify HMIE and all relevant consultees, as prescribed by Schedule 2 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, inviting them to make representations on the proposal. The consultation period will run from 27 August to 5pm on 9 October 2026, which includes at least 30 school days.

16.0 Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held on Tuesday 8 September 2026 at 6pm in Ae Primary School. Anyone wishing to attend the meeting and participate is welcome to do so. The meeting will be convened by the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate, and Officers will present the reasons for bringing forward the proposal. There will be an opportunity for questions to be asked and comments to be made. A note will be taken so that comments can later be summarised and considered.

17.0 Responses to the Proposal

Representations may be made on the following:

- the proposal;
- alternatives to the proposal as listed above; and

- suggestions of other alternatives.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will consider all representations, and these should be received no later than 5.00pm on Friday 9 October 2026 by one of the methods detailed below:

Online Survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/JQ5YNbxvBQ>



Letter to: Statutory Consultation – Ae Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

Email to: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Respondents are required to clearly state the capacity in which they are expressing their views and agree to their name and any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process and published in the final Consultation Report (all other personal information will be redacted).

18.0 Meetings with Pupils

The Quality Improvement Officer alongside school staff will arrange to discuss proposals with pupils who are considered to be of suitable age and maturity in the affected schools. A record of questions, responses, and views will be taken, and this will be published in the Consultation Report.

19.0 Involvement of HMIE

Following the close of the consultation, Dumfries and Galloway Council will provide HMIE with copies of the written representations submitted, a summary of the oral representations made at the public meeting, and any other relevant documentation. This will allow HMIE to prepare a report on the proposal within a period of three weeks.

20.0 Consultation Report and Time for Further Consideration

After receiving HMIE's report, Dumfries and Galloway Council will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report in accordance with Sections 9, 10, and 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. It is expected that on 16 February 2027, Members of the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee will thereafter make their final decision on whether to implement the proposal. The decision will be made a minimum of three weeks after publication of the Consultation Report. If the Education, Skill sand Community Wellbeing Committee makes a closure decision, Dumfries and Galloway Council shall notify the Scottish Ministers within six working days of that decision and publish the fact that the Scottish Ministers have been notified, and that representations can be made to them. The Education Authority would also be required to publish a notice on its website of the decision to implement the proposal and explain why it is satisfied that closure is the most appropriate response to the reasons for formulating the proposal.

21.0 Explanation of Approach

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 (Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980) and to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education in schools that are managed by them (Section 3 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000).

22.0 Designation of Rural Schools

Ae Primary School is a rural school within the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended (the school is classified as "accessible rural"), and Dumfries and Galloway Council has had regard to the provisions of the Act, in particular the special consideration required for rural school closures. Dumfries and Galloway Council has considered the school roll projections for Ae Primary School (see Section 4.2); has given detailed consideration to the viable alternatives to closure (Sections 3.0 and 3.1); to the effect of closure on the community (Section 9.0); and to the impact of travel arrangements on children who are not yet of school age but who live in the Ae Primary School catchment (Section 10.0). At present, the pupils who live within the Ae Primary School catchment attend nine different primary schools in the region, the greatest number of which (7) being at Nethermill Primary School.

23.0 Call-in of Closure Proposal and Determination of Case

The Scottish Ministers will have a maximum of eight weeks to call in any closure decision made by Dumfries and Galloway Council in certain circumstances. This eight-week timeframe would consist of an initial three weeks from the date of decision, during which representations can be made to the ministers, and a further five weeks

for the Scottish Ministers to decide whether to issue a call in notice. During this period the Education Authority will not proceed to implement any closure decision.

If the Scottish Ministers call in a closure proposal, it is referred to the Convener of the School Closure Review Panels. The Convener must constitute a School Closure Review Panel within seven days for determination. The Education Authority may not implement a closure decision in whole or in part until the Panel has made its determination. It will usually issue a decision within eight weeks of the Panel being constituted.

If the School Closure Review Panel refuses to consent to the closure decision, or following publication of the Consultation Report Dumfries and Galloway Council decides not to implement the closure proposal, a further closure proposal cannot be published in relation to the school for five years, unless there is a significant change in the school's circumstances.

24.0 Grounds for Call-In

The Scottish Ministers may issue a call-in notice where it appears to the Scottish Ministers that Dumfries and Galloway Council may have failed:

- (a) in a significant regard to comply with the requirements imposed on it by (or under) the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended so far as they are relevant in relation to the closure proposal, or
- (b) to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal.

During the eight week period, the education authority may not proceed to implement the proposed closure, unless Ministers have informed the authority that they do not intend to call in the proposal. However, such a decision will not be before the three week period for representations to be made to them has elapsed.

25.0 Conclusion

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at Ae Primary School, which is currently temporarily closed, and to realign its catchment area to Nethermill Primary School.

It is proposed that education provision at Ae Primary School be discontinued with effect from 23 April 2027.

It has been assessed that the proposal is the most appropriate means of addressing the underlying reasons for formulating it, which are:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggest that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

In addition to the main reasons outlined above, the following considerations have also informed the proposal to discontinue education provision at Ae Primary School:

- The educational benefits, as set out in Section 8, to current and future primary-aged children within the Ae Primary School catchment area.
- Councils have a statutory duty, introduced in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, to make arrangements to secure 'best-value'.
- On 30 November 2023, Elected Members approved the 10 School Model Principles to be used as a basis for a sustainable school estate. Applying these principles will help ensure best-value and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all children and young people, while considering the needs and wishes of people and communities. These principles are detailed in the Preliminary Requirements document at Appendix 3.
- Dumfries and Galloway Council currently has in excess of 4,613 (33%) spaces within its current primary school estate (correct as academic year 2025/26). It must be acknowledged that the costs-per-pupil in under-occupied schools are excessively high and that underutilised schools are expensive to maintain and operate. The current condition, suitability and over capacity is unsustainable and can only be improved by reducing the school estate.

Appendix 1

Financial Template

Table 1	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	Current revenue costs for school proposed for closure			
		Costs for full financial year 22/23 (projected annual costs)	Additional financial impact on receiving school [enter name of school]	Annual recurring savings (column 2 minus column 3)
Row 2	Name of School			
Row 3	AE PRIMARY SCHOOL			
Row 4	School costs			
Row 5	Employee costs - note 1			
Row 6	teaching staff	131,033	-	131,033
Row 7	support staff	15,365	-	15,365
Row 8	teaching staff training (CPD etc)	-	-	-
Row 9	support staff training	-	-	-
Row 10	Supply costs - note 2	5,681	-	5,681
Row 11				
Row 12	Building costs:			
Row 13	property insurance	-	-	-
Row 14	non domestic rates	2,100	-	2,600
Row 15	water & sewerage charges	1,500	-	1,500
Row 16	energy costs	9,358	-	9,358
Row 17	cleaning (contract or inhouse)	7,350	-	7,350
Row 18	building repair & maintenance	21	-	21
Row 19	grounds maintenance	1,407	-	1,407
Row 20	facilities management costs - note 6	3,719	-	3,719
Row 21	revenue costs arising from capital	-	-	-
Row 22	other	438	-	438
Row 23				
Row 24	School operational costs:			
Row 25	learning materials	3,423	-	3,423
Row 26	catering (contract or inhouse)	18,644	-	18,644
Row 27	SQA costs	-	-	-
Row 28	other school operational costs (e.g. licences)	159	-	159
Row 29				
Row 30	Transport costs: note 3			
Row 31	home to school	-	31,350	-31,350
Row 32	other pupil transport costs	-	-	-
Row 33	staff travel	191	-	191
Row 34	SCHOOL COSTS SUB-TOTAL	200,388	31,350	169,538
Row 35				
Row 36	Income:			
Row 37	Sale of meals	-	-	-
Row 38	Lets	205	-	-
Row 39	External care provider	-	-	-
Row 40	Other	-	-	-
Row 41	SCHOOL INCOME SUB-TOTAL	205	-	-
Row 42				
Row 43	TOTAL COSTS MINUS INCOME FOR SCHOOL	200,183	-	
Row 44				
Row 45	UNIT COST PER PUPIL PER YEAR	12511		

Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
Table 2		
Capital costs	School proposed for closure	Receiving school
Capital Life Cycle cost - note 7		
Third party contributions to capital costs		

Table 3	
Annual Property costs incurred (moth-balling) until disposal	
property insurance	-
non domestic rates	2,600
water & sewerage charges	443
energy costs	4,175
cleaning (contract or inhouse)	-
security costs	-
building repair & maintenance	-
grounds maintenance	703
facilities management costs	-
other	-
TOTAL ANNUAL COST UNTIL DISPOSAL	7,920

Table 4	
Non-recurring revenue costs	
TOTAL NON-RECURRING REVENUE COSTS	

Table 5	
Impact on GAE - note 5	
GAE IMPACT	

Notes
1. The total costs incurred for teaching staff (row 5) and support staff (row 6) are required to be included. Column 2 should include the current costs for a full financial year for the school proposed for closure, and column 3 should include the <i>additional</i> cost to the receiving school as a result of staff transferring. For teaching staff, this should include regular teachers, itinerant teachers, learning support teaching staff and special education (ASN) staff. Itinerant teaching staff includes central support services such as English as additional language support, hearing, visually impaired services, educational psychology services. For support staff, this should include classroom assistants, administration staff and janitorial staff. For all staff the costs entered should include salary, NI and pension costs. If the school proposed for closure has less than 3 staff members, then the cumulative staff costs only should be given in row 5 (for both teaching and support staff), so as to avoid possible disclosure of individual salaries. Training costs should be identified separately in rows 7 and 8.
2. Supply costs to cover teaching and support staff. This may be held in a central budget, be devolved or shared across the budgets.
3. 'Home to school' pupil transport costs should include those school transport costs incurred in accordance with Council policy. 'Other pupil transport costs' will cover costs incurred for the transport of pupils for activities such as swimming etc
4. Row 30 of column 3 should include the additional transport costs related to the increased home to school transport arrangements that are put in place in accordance with Council policy. This figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher than current costs.
5. This table is to capture the impact on the revenue support grant as a result of changes to GAE. Impact on GAE should consider the issues covered in the GAE section of the guidance document that accompany this template.
6. Facilities management costs will include costs related to caretaking, janitorial and security.
7. The capital costs for the receiving school should be taken across the life cycle of the school in line with the life expectancy of that school. The capital costs for the school proposed for closure should be taken across the same life cycle period.

Statutory Consultation – Ae Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

E-mail: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk
Thursday 27 August 2026

Dear Consultee,

Review of Education Provision Notice and Summary of Proposal for closing Ae Primary School, Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is consulting on the proposal to close Ae Primary School. This notice provides a summary of the proposal; it is a requirement for you to be notified of the consultation as a consultee, in accordance with Schedule 2 Section 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is conducting a public consultation from Thursday 27 August to Friday 9 October 2026. This is the period in which you will be able to make representation to Dumfries and Galloway Council in respect of the proposal. It is important that everyone we are consulting with tells us about their thoughts on the proposal.

This summary provides further information on where a full copy of the proposal can be obtained and also advises as to how you can make representation.

The Proposal

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proposing, subject to the outcome of the statutory consultation process, to discontinue education provision at Ae Primary School, which is currently temporarily closed, and to realign its catchment area to Nethermill Primary School. As a result, the feeder secondary school for pupils currently living within the Ae Primary School catchment area would change from Dumfries High School to Lockerbie Academy.

It is proposed that education provision at Ae Primary School be discontinued with effect from 23 April 2027. Implementation of the realigned secondary catchment area will take effect at the start of the 2027/28 academic year.

Reasons for this Proposal

This is considered to be the most appropriate response to address the reasons for the proposal which are:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggested that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School

despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.

- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028, Education and Learning Directorate.

The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work. We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community.

Strategic Outcomes

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities.
- We get it right for every child.
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages.
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve.
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences.
- Local people can build their skills and confidence.

Alternatives to the Proposal (Including the Proposal)

The proposal and reasonable alternatives to the proposal were considered as part of the preliminary requirement and are detailed below;

1. Status Quo (Continuation of Temporary Closure (previously known as 'Mothballing')) – No change to the current school arrangements at Ae Primary School, with the expectation that pupil numbers will increase sufficiently to allow the school to reopen.

2. Closure – This would involve a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ae Primary School and realign the catchment area. (This was included for completeness at the drop-in sessions and online survey to enable stakeholders to comment. As closure is the proposal itself (rather than an alternative to it), it is not examined as a reasonable alternative).
3. Reopening of the School – Ae Primary School would be reopened.

Representations may be made on the following;

- the proposal;
- reasonable alternatives to the proposal as listed above; and
- suggestions of other reasonable alternatives not listed above that address the reasons for the proposal.

What we will do –

We will consult by:

- Providing a notice of the consultation and a summary of the proposal to the relevant consultees - this is that notice and summary.
- Placing an advert in the local press.
- Putting information on our website - www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations
- Holding a public meeting to explain the proposal (Tuesday 15 September 2026)
- Ask all consultees to tell us what they think of the proposal including via an online survey.

What to do now –

- Please read the full proposal document.
- Please attend the public meeting which will be held on Tuesday 15 September 2026 at 6pm at Ae Primary School, Ae.
- Let us know what you think by 5pm on Friday 9 October 2026 via the survey link below:

Online Survey Link: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/kWgvbcLg1d>

QR Code to Online Survey:



Letter to: Statutory Consultation – Ae Primary School
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Militia House
109/111 English Street
DG1 2HR

Email to: statutoryconsultation@dumgal.gov.uk

Respondents are required to clearly state the capacity in which they are expressing their views and agree to their name and any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process and published in the final Consultation Report (all other personal information will be redacted).

What Next?

Dumfries and Galloway Council is seeking your views on the proposal during the consultation period - it does not assume that the proposal will go ahead. All points raised during the consultation period will be included in the final consultation paper before being presented to Elected Members at Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee where a decision will be taken as to the outcome of this process.

If the proposal goes ahead, any children current and future from the Ae Primary School catchment area would be educated at Nethermill Primary School, although parents/carers would still be able to make placing requests for other primary schools.

Please note that this summary document is for convenience only. Copies of the Proposal Paper can be obtained from:

- Ae Primary School, Ae;
- Nethermill Primary School, Parkgate; and
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Headquarters, Dumfries.

And published on Dumfries and Galloway Council website at:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/consultations

Yours faithfully,



Larann Foss
Head of Education Resources

Ae Primary School – Phase One – Preliminary Requirements**1.0 Introduction**

Dumfries and Galloway Council are committed to giving all local children and young people an equal chance to fulfil their potential. Our ambition is to be a successful region, with a growing economy, based on fairness, opportunity and quality public services, where all citizens prosper. For our children and young people, raising attainment in schools is key to who they may become and how they will contribute to society. This will require a sustainable school estate that works for everyone and is able to secure 'best-value' to the public.

The Dumfries and Galloway Learning Estate Strategy was agreed by the Education and Learning Committee (now Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee) on 26 January 2023 (with a revised Strategy agreed by Elected Members on 11 November 2025). The Learning Estate Strategy sets out a holistic, long-term view to ensure all schools are well designed, maintained and managed and most importantly that this view is shared between all stakeholders and decision makers.

On 30 November 2023, Elected Members also approved the 10 School Model Principles listed below to be used as a basis for a sustainable School Model. Applying these Principles will help ensure 'best-value' and sustainable settings, resulting in an improved learning environment for all our children and young people, whilst considering the needs and wishes of people and communities.

To meet current and future demand, we must continue to transform services, reduce spend in unsustainable areas and be prepared to think differently about how services are delivered to make the most effective use of resources. The Principles are weighted, with the priority for review starting at the top of the list.

School Estate Principles

1. Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for each of Condition and Suitability.
2. Primary pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school.
3. Secondary pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 45 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school.
4. To enhance high quality social and educational experiences, primary schools should ordinarily support 3 classes and have composite classes of no greater than 3-year groups.
5. To enhance high quality social and educational experiences, secondary schools should ordinarily support a 2-form entry (2 registration classes in S1).
6. Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising of at least 3 FTE members based at the same school.
7. Schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% utilisation of the capacity of the school and ideally should be operating at 80% utilisation.
8. All schools should be adaptable to children, staff, and visitors with disabilities.
9. All schools should support community use where required in the local context.

10. All schools should have key facilities including a hall, dining area, staff room, school office and grass playing fields as appropriate to the size and scale of the school.

Maintaining the engagement of stakeholders and keeping them informed is an important part of successful change. The co-operation of a variety of stakeholders will be needed, and we know that good consultation means better outcomes, and the Benefits of engaging with, consulting and involving stakeholders at this early stage helps to highlight expectations and identify all the options.

The Schools (Consultation) Scotland Act 2010 as amended requires that educational Benefits should be at the forefront of any proposal to make a significant change to schools. It specifies that the local authority must, for all consultations, prepare an Educational Benefits Statement and publish it within the proposal paper. Only through a close partnership with our schools and stakeholders can a proposal be produced that will benefit both current and future learners.

On 22 April 2025, Members of the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee noted that Officers would engage with local families and the wider community of Ae Primary School to further consider future options for the school.

A link to that committee's agenda and minutes can be found below:

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6229>

2.0 Reason for the Proposal

A local authority that is formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended before starting to prepare its proposal paper.

[12A Preliminary requirements in relation to rural school closure

(1) This section applies where an education authority is formulating a closure proposal as respects a rural school.

(2) The authority must -

(a) identify its reasons for formulating the proposal,

(b) consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to the proposal as a response to those reasons,

(c) assess, for the proposal and each of the alternatives to the proposal identified under paragraph (b) (if any) -

(i) the likely educational Benefits in consequence of the implementation of the proposal, or as the case may be, alternative,

(ii) the likely effect on the local community (assessed in accordance with section 12(4)) in consequence of such implementation,

(iii) the likely effect that would be caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required (assessed in accordance with section 12(5)) in consequence of such implementation.

(3) For the purposes of this section and section 13, reasonable alternatives to the proposal include (but are not limited to) steps which would not result in the school or a stage of education in the school (within the meaning of paragraph 12 of schedule 1) being discontinued.

(4) The authority may not publish a proposal paper in relation to the proposal unless, having complied with subsection (2), it considers that implementation of the closure proposal would be the most appropriate response to the reasons for the proposal.

(5) In this section and section 13, the references to the reasons for the proposal are references to the reasons identified by the education authority under subsection (2)(a).]

In particular, it must identify the underlying reasons why the future of the school is being considered, which are as follows:

- Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed since 31 March 2023 for more than 3 years.
- There is no evidence to suggested that there is sufficient desire from current catchment families to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School despite the number of catchment pupils increasing during the period of temporary closure.
- Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers with the National Records of Scotland predicting a further 18% fall in the 0-15 age group over the next 10 years.
- Along with several other rural councils, Dumfries and Galloway Council is facing increasing challenges in recruiting staff.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is therefore considering the future of Ae Primary School. The various alternatives to closure are explored in this paper.

3.0 Background

Ae Primary School is designated as a 'accessible rural' school under the Scottish Government's Rural Schools List and is therefore subject to the enhanced procedural requirements set out in sections 12A and 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a result, the education authority must undertake a Preliminary Requirements phase before formulating any closure proposal, ensuring that statutory duties are met in relation to educational benefit, community impact, and travel arrangements.

On 29 June 2023, Elected Members of Dumfries and Galloway Council's Education and Learning Committee noted the position of Ae Primary School. The school roll had fallen sharply over the academic year up to March 2023. A meeting was held between staff, parents and council officers where the families in attendance stated a preference to remain at the school but felt the school roll had dropped too low, so expressed their desire to enrol their children at alternative schools. The school roll following the Easter break for Ae Primary School was zero, and there were no Primary 1 enrolment made for academic year 2023/24. Members agreed to the temporary closure and the realignment of the catchment area to Nethermill Primary School.

Education and Learning Committee, 29 June 2023 – Item 12

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5752&Ver=4>

Members of Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee on 8 February 2024 agreed to grant a two-year Licence to Occupy Ae Primary School and land to Ae Community Council. The Ae locality did not have a hireable space / venue that community groups could utilise, other than the Primary School. Appropriate break clause arrangements were put in place to ensure the school would be available for educational purposes throughout the temporary closure period should demand result in the school reopening. The current lease expires in September 2026.

Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee, 8 February 2024 – Item 15

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=552&MId=5899&Ver=4>

Families were given the opportunity during the P1 enrolment process for academic year 2024/25 and 2025/26 to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School; catchment families, ward officers, ward members and Ae Community Councils were contacted via email to notify them of the enrolment (P1) and transfer (P2-P7) opportunity. No enrolments or transfers were received for either academic year and Ae Primary School remained temporary closed.

Education and Learning Committee, Thursday 14 March 2024 – Item 7

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=5909&Ver=4>

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, Thursday 1 July 2025 – Item 14

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6229>

As per the opportunity mentioned above, the same process was followed for academic year 2026/27, two enrolment forms were received for Ae Primary School for Primary 1. Members of Education, Skill sand Community Wellbeing Committee on 12 May 2026 noted the due to the low number the school will remain temporarily closed for academic year 2026/27. Also noted, was the families that submitted enrolment forms were contacted to inform them of the outcome and discuss a suitable alternative school for their children for Primary 1.

Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee, Tuesday 12 May 2026 – Item 6

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=626&MId=6518&Ver=4>

Dumfries and Galloway Council commenced Phase One – Preliminary Requirements under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 for Ae Primary School in April 2026, to determine the most appropriate next steps in line with the statutory framework. This process ensures that any future consideration of options, will be informed by a robust assessment of educational Benefits, community effects, and travel implications, as required by Section 12A of the 2010 Act.

3.1 Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028

Councils, as an Education Authority, have a statutory duty in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make adequate and efficient provision of school education across their entire area for the current school population and future pattern of demand. This is reflected in the Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028, Education and Learning Directorate.

The Council will improve education and learning opportunities to help all our children, young people and citizens fulfil their potential. This starts with pre-school, then school, before progressing into further or higher education or transition into work. We will work with our partners to create and promote lifelong learning opportunities so everyone in the region can live a meaningful and fulfilling life and contribute to their community.

The Strategic Outcomes of the Council are:

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages

- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

3.2 Ae Primary School

Ae Primary School is classified as being in an 'accessible rural' area. The Scottish Government defines an accessible rural area as an areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a drive time of 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more. Ae Primary School is located in the village of Ae, approximately 9.9 miles from the next nearest town centre, Dumfries.

The neighbouring primary schools to Ae Primary School are Wallace Hall Primary School, Closeburn Primary School, Duncow Primary School, Amisfield Primary School, Nethermill Primary School and Johnstonebridge Primary School. The school is a feeder primary schools to Dumfries High School.

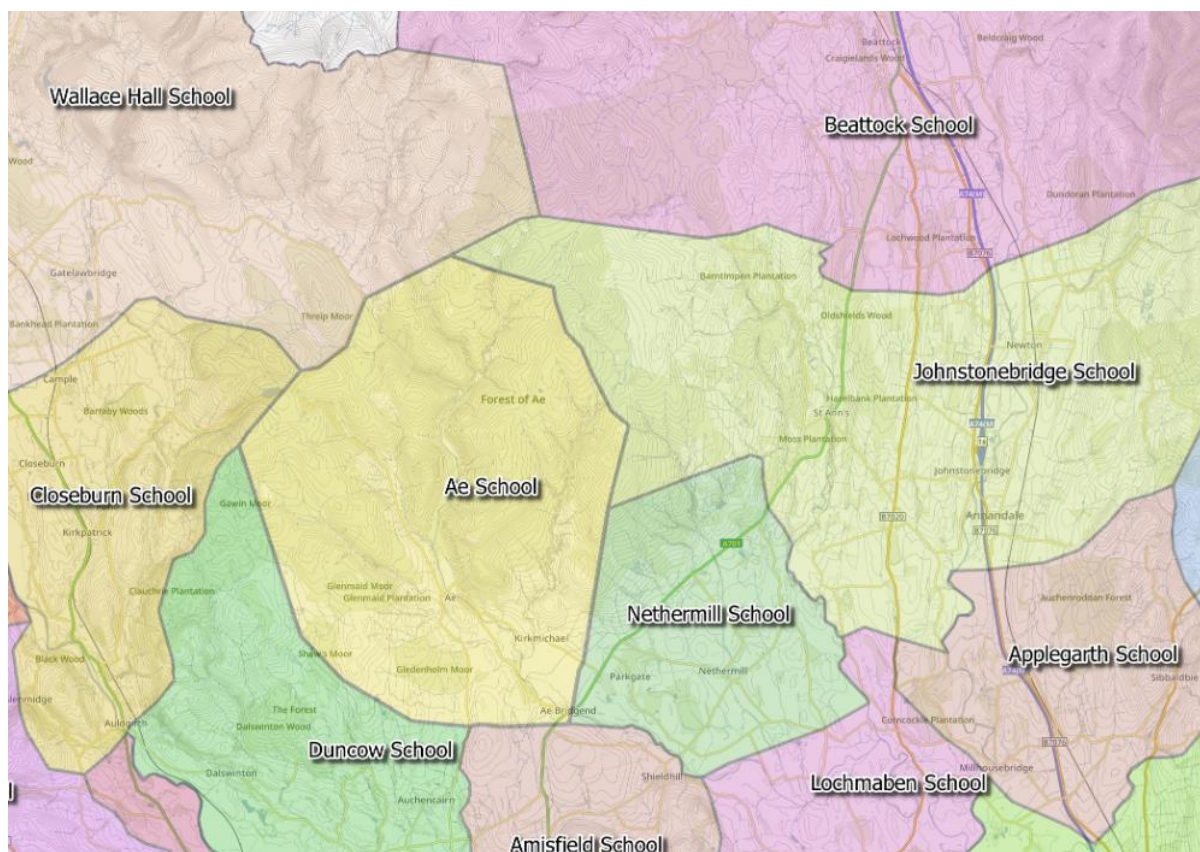


Figure 1: Ae Primary School Catchment Area and Neighbouring Primary Schools

The distance between Ae Primary School and surrounding primary schools sourced from Google Maps are listed below:

Amisfield Primary School	6 miles
Closeburn Primary School	8.5 miles
Duncow Primary School	5.3 miles
Johnstonebridge Primary School	11.0 miles

APPENDIX

Nethermill Primary School	4.9 miles
Wallace Hall Primary School	11.4 miles

It is important to note that the geography of the catchment area means that travel distances/times will be different for all pupils, which is why the information listed above is from Ae Primary School to surrounding schools.

The Ae Primary School site and building is owned by Dumfries and Galloway Council. There are no records of the school, or any part of the building, being listed with Historic Scotland. The school has a capacity of 50 pupils. It is a single storey building which underwent capital investment in 2019. As part of the capital works the room marked GP Room 011 on the plan below (Figure 2) was designed to operate as the second classroom or as a secure community space, with separate access, designated toilets and a secure door between the school and community room.

The school floorplan is shown below.

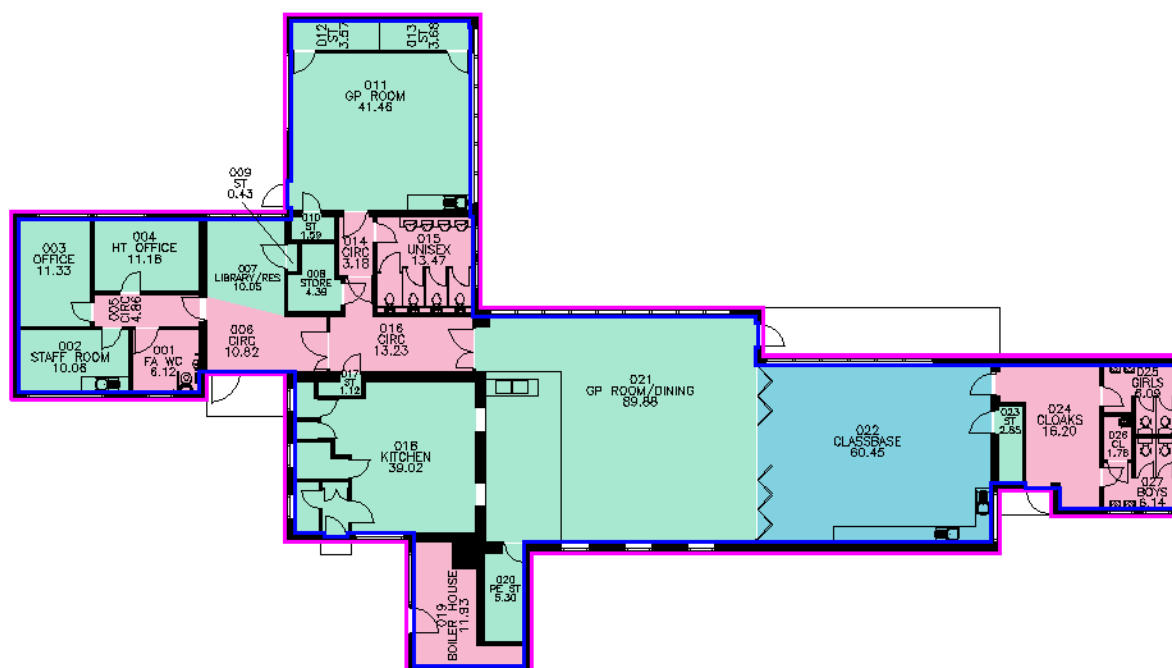


Figure 2: School Floorplan

The school has a production kitchen, when the school was last in operation the kitchen provided food for the children of Ae Primary School, it did not feed out to any other schools in the area. The outside area wraps round the school and is predominately hard standing to the front with a small section of paving to the rear along with a grassed area.

Information relating to the Extent, Condition, Sufficiency and Suitability of the school estate is reported by Dumfries and Galloway Council to the Scottish Government on an annual basis, this is known as the Core Facts Return.

Condition relates to the current state of the school building fabric, including safety and security. The assessment is carried out by a contractor independent of Dumfries and

Galloway Council. Ae Primary School was assessed in September 2021, the current overall condition rating across the building is A, classified *“Performing well and operating effectively (physical element carries out function totally as new including consideration of the transverse elements)”* (Scottish Government – The Condition Core Fact)

Suitability is a measure of whether a school building and its grounds are appropriate for delivering the education curriculum. A suitability assessment of Ae Primary School was carried out in February 2022 and the school was graded as A (Good) under the Core Facts guidance, meaning it is performing well overall and operating effectively.

3.3 The Communities of Ae Primary School

Ae Primary School serves an accessible rural catchment, with sparse settlements beyond the core village within Ae itself. The community is represented by Ae Community Council; their boundary covers a similar area (with marginal variances) to that of the school catchment area as detailed in Figure 1.

Ae Village currently has no public facilities or village hall, leaving the Primary School as the only available venue for community use. Capital investment in financial year 2019/20, sort to address this by making adaptations to the school to allow for secure community use addressing inefficiencies within the building. Following the temporary closure of the building in 2023, a Licence to Occupy was established for the entire Ae Primary School building and its grounds for Ae Community Council, recognising the lack of alternative hireable spaces in the locality. The current lease expires in September 2026.

3.4 Local Housing Development

Dumfries and Galloway Council’s second Local Development Plan 2019 (LDP2) is the key planning document that sets out how land and property should be used across the region, guiding decisions on future development. It identifies where different types of development, including housing, businesses, community facilities and infrastructure, may take place and provides the policy framework against which all planning applications are assessed. Adopted in October 2019, LDP2 plays a central role in shaping long-term growth, protecting the environment and supporting sustainable communities.

LDP2 does not identify any sites within Ae Village or the wider catchment area for housing development. The LDP2 Housing Development in Villages (Supplementary Guidance – February 2020) covers Ae Village.

https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/Housing_Development_in_Villages_SG_LDP2_Adopted.pdf

The document states;

Policy H2: Housing Development in Villages The Council will support housing development proposals in villages, subject to other policies in the plan where:

- *the number of units proposed relates to the scale and size of the existing village; and*
- *it does not on its own or in combination with other developments in the housing market area undermine the overall objective of the spatial strategy; and*
- *it relates to the layout, density and design of the character and form of the existing village; and*
- *it would not lead to ribbon development; and*
- *the proposal would not result in the loss of open space shown in the Open Space Supplementary Guidance.*

Any development particularly within Ae Primary School catchment area would need to meet the requirements of the bullet points as detailed above.

3.5 Demographics and Pupil Numbers

National Records of Scotland predict the number of children and young adults in Scotland aged 0 to 29 years will decrease between mid-2022 to mid-2047. Over this 25-year period it is predicted there will be -79.9k fewer children aged 0-15 and -57.4k fewer young adults aged 16-29. By 2047, children are predicted to make up only 14% of the population.

Dumfries and Galloway is currently experiencing a significant and sustained fall in pupil numbers. The Council holds electronic records of school rolls back to academic year 1975/76. The total Dumfries and Galloway Primary School Roll since 1975 is displayed on the graph below:

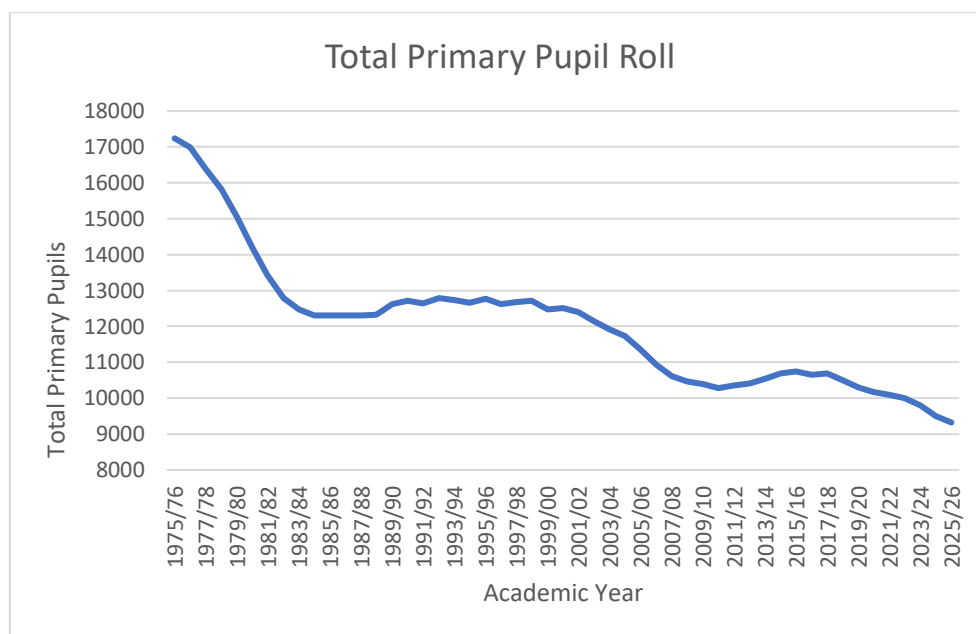


Figure 3: Dumfries and Galloway Total Primary Pupil Roll

The historical school roll for Ae Primary School from academic year 1975/76 to date is displayed in the graph below.

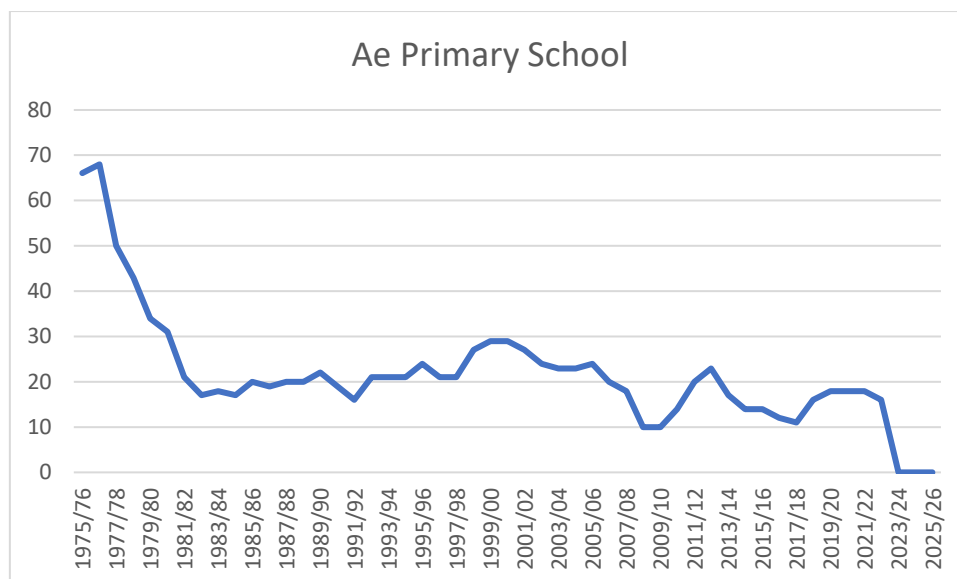


Figure 4: Ae Primary Historic Pupil Roll

There are currently 20 children of P1-P7 age (academic year 2025/26) residing within the catchment area of Ae Primary School (SEEMiS data May 2026). The catchment children are detailed in figure 5 below. These children of primary school age all attend other schools in the area, some as a result of the temporary closure of Ae Primary School, others through parental choice. The catchment pupils attend nine different primary schools in the region, the greatest number of which (7) being at Nethermill Primary School.

Academic Year	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2025/26	1	3	7	1	7	1	4	2	4	1	20
2026/27				7	1	7	1	4	2	4	26
2027/28				3	7	1	7	1	4	2	25
2028/29				1	3	7	1	7	1	4	24

Figure 5: Pupil Projections

If all current catchment pupils were to attend Ae Primary School for academic year 2026/27, the utilisation of the school would be 52% (26 pupils). This utilisation rate is below the desired occupancy levels as described in School Model Principle 7 where schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% utilisation of the capacity of the school and ideally should be operating at 80% and assumes all pupils would attend.

During the period of temporary closure the number of pupils living in the Ae Primary School catchment area has increased. Figure 6 below details the number of catchment pupils back to academic year 2017/18, with the anticipated catchment pupils for future years marked in green. The red line denotes the point at which the school temporarily closed.

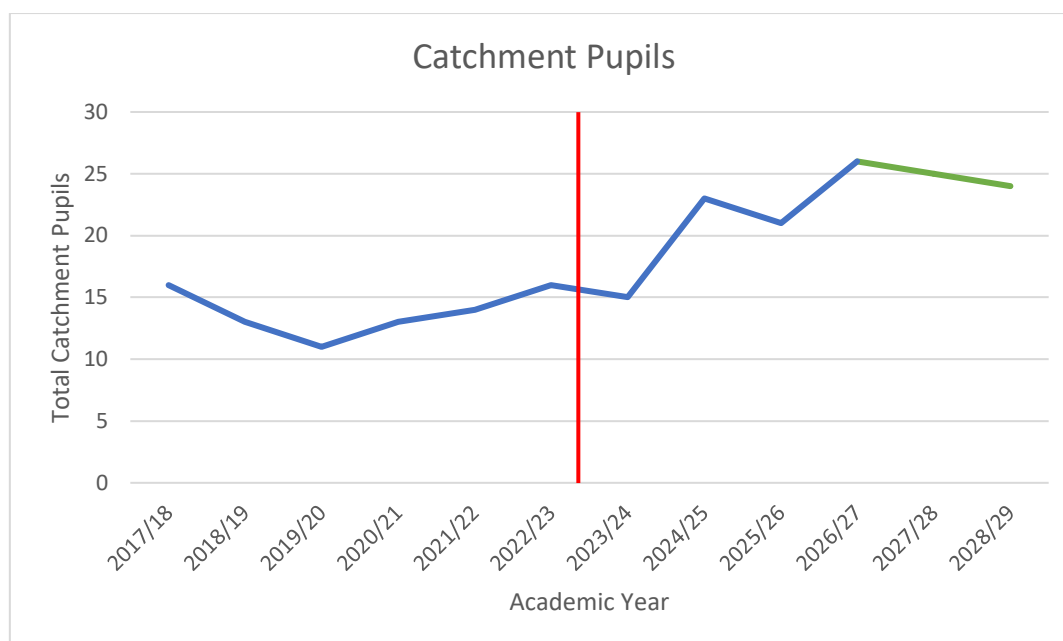


Figure 6: Catchment Pupils

3.6 Pupil Enrolments

In line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance, there must be an annual review to establish the desire of families living in the catchment area to enrol or transfer their children to Ae Primary School. Information regarding this process and links to the relevant committees are detailed in Section 3.0 Background. There has been to date very few families wishing to enrol or transfer their children, for academic years 2023/24 through to 2025/26 there were no enrolment or transfer requests, this breakdown is displayed in the table below:

Year	Total Pupils
2023/24	0
2024/25	0
2025/26	0
2026/27	2*

Figure 7: Pupil Enrolments

*Both the enrolments received for academic year 2026/27 were for Primary 1, these families have been supported in securing alternative Primary 1 places. All families living within the Ae Primary School catchment area have catchment status for Nethermill Primary School and priority over places in line with the Schools Admission Policy, should this be their preferred choice of school, all other requests for alternative schools are placing requests and are managed in line with policy.

In considering pupil enrolments, the Council is required under section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education across its area, rather than to sustain individual schools irrespective of roll.

4.0 Community Engagement

Council Officers from the Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Directorate conducted the following engagements with the communities of Ae Primary School to keep them fully informed and to explore potential options for the future of Ae Primary School:

- Community Drop In 1 – Ae Primary School – Tuesday 5 May 3:30pm – 6:30pm
- Community Drop In 2 – Ae Primary School – Friday 8 May 10:30am – 12:30pm

During this community engagement process, Council Officers supported public drop-in sessions as listed above to share information and assist members of the community and school stakeholders in understanding the processes required at this stage and potential next steps.

As part of the engagement, officers outlined a number of potential alternatives being considered at a preliminary stage. Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback on these alternatives, with particular reference to likely educational impact, community impact, and travel and transport considerations. Officers also invited attendees to propose any other reasonable and realistic alternatives to closure that they wished the Council to consider. It was emphasised throughout that no decisions had been made and that this stage of the process was intended to gather views and explore options.

To ensure wider participation, officers also highlighted that an online public survey (paper copies were also made available and distributed) was available for the same purpose. This provided an opportunity for those unable to attend the drop-in sessions, or those who wished additional time to reflect following attendance at one of the drop-in sessions, to submit their feedback and suggest alternative options for consideration.

In total 15 stakeholders (plus two children) attended the drop-in sessions. A total of 15 responses were received to the survey, one of which was submitted by paper format, this survey response was added to the online survey to allow for continuity, summary and anonymity. Responses are numbered 3 through 17, respondents 4 and 16 did not give their permission for their responses to be published in full and are therefore not included in the appendices. The views and feedback from respondent 4 and 16 are included in the summarised stakeholder feedback throughout this document. Responses 1 and 2 are not included in the appendices as these were test surveys carried out by officers which were subsequently deleted.

All stakeholder feedback from both the drop-in sessions and the online survey can be found in their entirety in Appendices 1 and 2.

5.0 Reasonable Alternatives to the Proposal

There is a duty on the authority in terms of section 12A(2) to identify any reasonable alternatives to the proposal which might also address the reasons for the proposal.

Three options (including closure) were presented to school stakeholders at the public drop-in sessions and via the online survey by Council Officers. An additional three alternatives were proposed by consultees, either at a drop-in session or via the online survey for a total of six options.

Re-alignment of the catchment area could, in certain circumstances, represent a reasonable alternative to school closure under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. However, in the case of Ae Primary School, this option was determined not to be reasonable. Ae Primary Schools catchment area geography means that any expansion to the North encompasses more forest and rural areas with no significant centres of populations as per Figure 8 below.

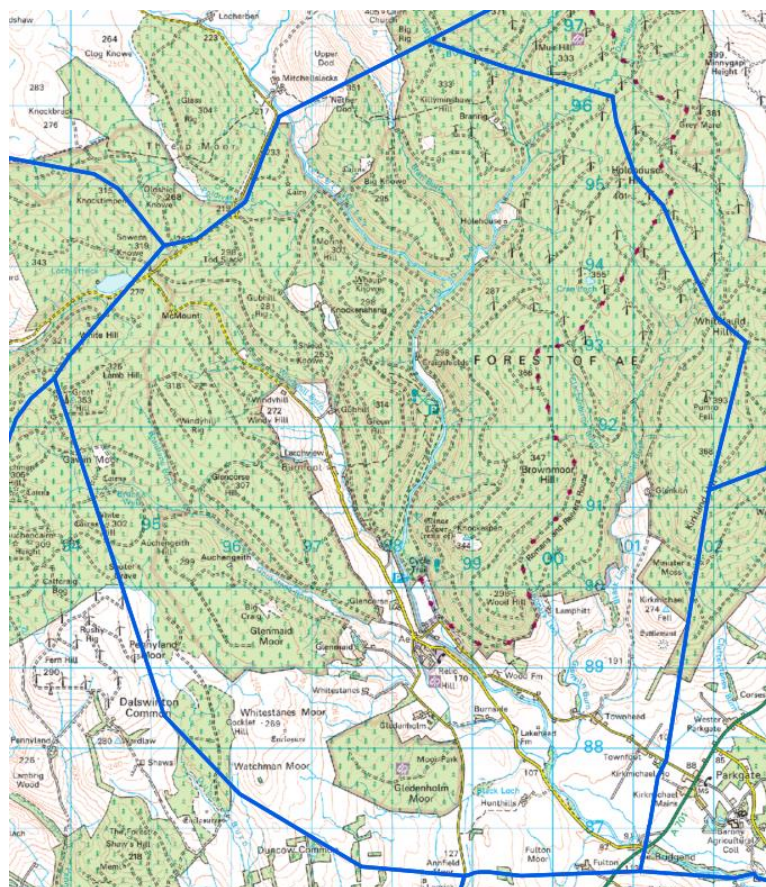


Figure 8: Ae Primary School Catchment Area Geography

Similarly the geographic relationship to neighbouring catchment areas in the South was considered to significantly limit the feasibility of extending its boundary without adversely affecting other school communities particularly Nethermill Primary School. Figure 9 below details (in dark purple) the areas of population at Ae, Parkgate and Nethermill. Both Nethermill and Parkgate are within the catchment area of Nethermill Primary School.

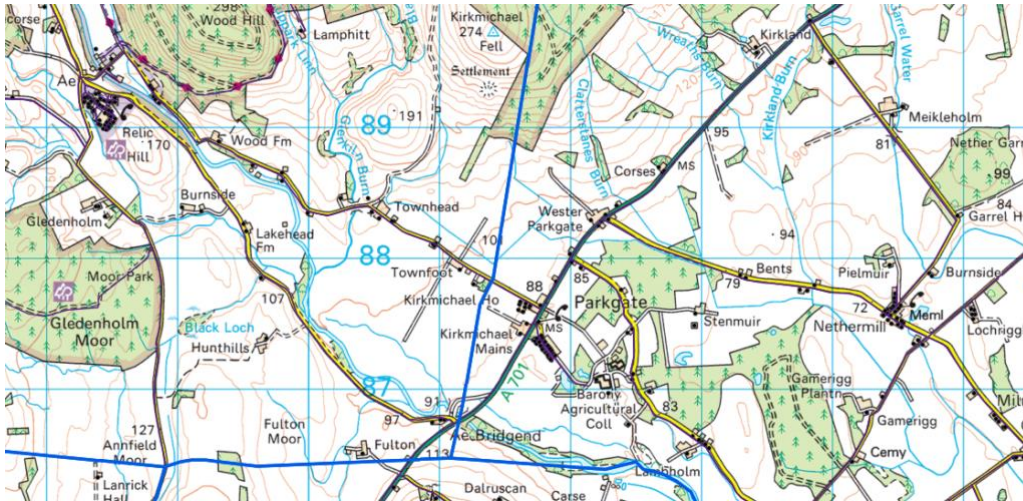


Figure 9: Ae Village, Parkgate and Nethermill

It was also determined that any catchment expansion would require consequential changes to the neighbouring Nethermill Primary School catchment area, with potential negative impacts on that school roll and community wishes. A key issue underpinning the proposal was that during the period of temporary closure, the number of catchment children for Ae Primary School has increased however the annual review has out turned little or no desire for pupils to attend, a catchment area change was not considered likely to address this. In line with statutory guidance, this option was therefore discounted as an unreasonable alternative prior to consultation.

All other options, along with a brief description, are listed below. Officers have sought to reflect stakeholders' wording where possible, but some options have been summarised and standardised for clarity, consistency and relevance to the statutory considerations.

Reasonable alternatives to closure for Ae Primary School

1. **Status Quo (Continuation of Temporary Closure (previously known as 'Mothballing'))** – No change to the current school arrangements at Ae Primary School, with the expectation that pupil numbers will increase sufficiently to allow the school to reopen.
2. **Closure** – This would involve a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ae Primary School and realign the catchment area. (This was included for completeness at the drop-in sessions and online survey to enable stakeholders to comment. As closure is the proposal itself (rather than an alternative to it), it is not examined as a reasonable alternatives but is fully assessed later in this report).
3. **Reopening of the School** – Ae Primary School would be reopened.

Alternative proposals suggested at the Drop-In Sessions or Online Survey

4. **Dedicated ASN Provision** – A specialist facility at Ae Primary School supporting pupils with additional support needs.

5. **Shared Council/Community Facility** – A shared facility between the school and the community with split costs.
6. **Outdoor Education Facility** – The building could be used as a base for outdoor learning activities.

Drop-in sessions and online survey feedback also included variations, refinements or combinations of the existing reasonable alternatives already identified, rather than distinct additional alternatives with minor differences. As such, they are considered to be encompassed within options 1 to 6 above and do not require separate assessment at the preliminary requirements stage.

All stakeholder feedback from both the drop-in sessions and the online survey can be found in their entirety in Appendices 1 and 2.

In accordance with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, which requires the authority to consider only reasonable and viable alternatives to closure, the following options have been discounted as 'unreasonable' and are therefore not included in the assessment of reasonable alternatives.

These options and the reasons for their exclusion are set out below:

4. **Dedicated ASN Provision** – A specialist facility at Ae Primary School supporting pupils with additional support needs.
5. **Shared Council/Community Facility** – A shared facility between the school and the community with split costs.
6. **Outdoor Education Facility** – The building could be used as a base for outdoor learning activities.

Dedicated ASN Provision

Dumfries and Galloway Council has 19 learning centres across the primary and secondary school estate with one of these learning centres classified as a 'special school'. All ASN provision across Dumfries and Galloway is located in existing operational primary and/or secondary schools, allowing for the integration of all pupils as per their needs into mainstream classes.

Delivering a standalone facility would require specialist staffing, capital investment, and confirmed demand from across Dumfries and Galloway. There would likely be an increase demand on travel and travel times for pupils with only one primary aged child from the Ae Primary School catchment area currently accessing a leaning centre.

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, reasonable alternatives must be realistic, deliverable, and capable of addressing the issues identified. Officers consider that this option represents an aspirational development proposal rather than a viable alternative to school closure. This option cannot be

considered as a reasonable alternative to closure as Ae Primary School would need to be closed to allow for this option to be realised. It has therefore been discounted from further consideration.

Shared Council/Community Facility

This option was presented by a stakeholder for consideration; it reflects the previous operational arrangements whereby the school operated in conjunction with the community having secure access to the room to the rear of the building. Under this option, Ae Primary School would reopen, and the catchment Secondary School would remain as Dumfries High School.

This option would reinstate the school and offer a community space as per previous arrangements prior to the temporary closure. Given this option reflects the previous arrangements when the school was operational, this option whilst, a reasonable alternative to closure, it is very closely aligned with re-opening Ae Primary School and is therefore addressed as part of the option to reopen Ae Primary School.

Outdoor Education Facility

The proposal to establish an outdoor education facility has been assessed against the Council's statutory responsibilities. While the Council has a duty to provide primary and secondary education that is adequate and efficient, there is no statutory requirement to establish specialist outdoor facility.

Delivering a specialist outdoor education facility would require specialist staffing, capital investment, and confirmed demand from across Dumfries and Galloway. These factors sit outside the scope of a reasonable alternative intended to address the sustainability of an existing local authority primary school.

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, reasonable alternatives must be realistic, deliverable, and capable of addressing the issues identified. Officers consider that this option represents an aspirational development proposal rather than a viable alternative to school closure within the Council's statutory education functions. This option cannot be considered as a reasonable alternative to closure as Ae Primary School would need to be closed to allow for this option to be realised. It has therefore been discounted from further consideration.

The remaining three proposals to be considered as alternatives to the closure proposal in this preliminary report are set out below and have been renumbered for clarity. Closure is detailed as option 3 and is explored further following the assessment of options 1 and 2. These proposals are:

- 1. Status Quo (Continuation of Temporary Closure (previously known as 'Mothballing'))**
- 2. Reopening of the School**
- 3. School Closure and re-align the catchment area**

6.0 Option 1: Status Quo (Continuation of Temporary Closure (previously known as ‘Mothballing’))

Under this option, Ae Primary School would continue to be temporarily closed and the catchment area remain realigned to Nethermill Primary School. For secondary school Ae Primary School catchment pupils remain in the catchment area for Dumfries High School, whilst their peers from the Nethermill catchment area are catchment to Lockerbie Academy.

This option would maintain continuity for pupils currently attending the school and would avoid any immediate change to travel arrangements or schooling patterns. The building lease could potentially be extended beyond September 2026 to provide a community space within Ae Village. Temporary closure is intended to preserve the school building while allowing time for circumstances to change, Ae Primary School has already been temporarily closed beyond the recommended three-year period, section 2.5 para 63 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance states;

“The maximum length of the temporary closure’s duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”

The underlying assumption of this option is that pupil enrolment numbers could increase sufficiently over time to enable Ae Primary School to reopen and pupils to return. The number of catchment children has increased during the period of temporary closure as demonstrated in Figure 10 below, the annual review as detailed in section 3.6 pupil enrolments demonstrates that there has been little or at times no demand from families wishing to enrol or transfer their children to the school.

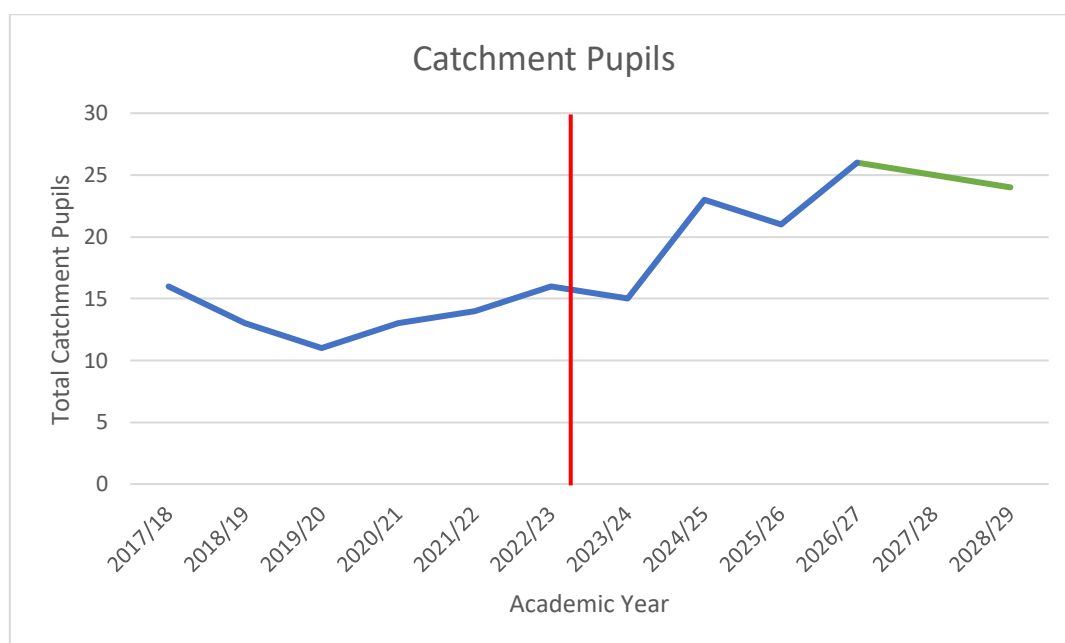


Figure 10: Catchment Pupils

(The red line denotes the point at which the Ae Primary School temporarily closed)

While this option maintains stability in the short term it does not address the need for certainty and a decision around the long-term future of Ae Primary School. These considerations, alongside pupil experience, educational benefit and longer-term planning, are important factors and are explored in more detail in the sections that follow should this option be taken forward for further assessment.

6.1 Community Feedback

Feedback on the status quo option reflected a wide range of views across both the drop-in sessions and the online survey. Some stakeholders were cautiously supportive of the continuation of the status quo as a short-term arrangement. Several stakeholders highlight the importance of keeping the school available as an option for future pupils, particularly given younger children in the area who may attend later. Some respondents emphasise the importance of local schooling and the broader impact of losing the school as a community facility. Overall, support for temporary closure presented mixed views and highlighted concerns about long-term implications.

Educational Benefits

Feedback from the drop-in sessions and online survey focussed on the educational Benefits of Ae Primary School, not necessarily the Benefits of temporary closure. Respondents cited small class sizes, individual learning and peer support, as well as strong social connections between children and families within a local setting. Also noted were the outdoor learning opportunities and community-based experiences, along with practical Benefits such as locally prepared meals and reduced travel.

Stakeholders noted that temporary closure discourages enrolment, as the school appears inactive, limiting parental choice and access to local education. Concerns raised that children attending different schools may experience reduced social cohesion in their local context.

Effect on the local community

At the drop-in sessions and through the online survey, stakeholders strongly emphasised the role of Ae Primary School building as a central part of community life. The school is seen as a central community asset, helping to bring families and the community together in the absence of any other facilities within the village. The school is currently strongly valued as a community hub and the focus for all activities, with a respondent stating, “its use as a community hub is working well”.

Stakeholders comments reflect a sense that losing or underusing the school represents a significant loss to the community’s identity, cohesion, and long-term sustainability. Concerns include the loss of a key community resource, reduced opportunities for social interaction, and the perception that the village is declining.

Concerns were raised regarding the uncertainty around the future of the school building. The closure (even temporary) of the school is widely seen as reducing opportunities for interaction particularly for older residents who rely on the school

building as a meeting point. Many view the school as the heart of the village or what holds the village together.

Effect of any different travel arrangements

Stakeholder's responses recognised Ae Primary School as a safer location for drop-off and pick-up compared to schools on busy roads, and its local setting allows children to walk there easily in a short time. However, there were several concerns associated with the current temporary arrangements, including children needing to wake earlier to catch transport, increased travel costs due to attending multiple schools, and longer days caused by earlier departures and later returns home. There are also worries that travel arrangements may leave children unsettled, while the overall disruption to family life could lead to some families moving out of the village. Additionally, there are questions about whether the full cost of transport has been properly assessed and compared to the operational costs of the Ae Primary School being operational, particularly given the reliance on buses and taxis, which were perceived as being significantly more expensive. During the engagement period no parents or families raised concerns over the current transport arrangements for their children to Nethermill Primary School.

All stakeholder feedback from both the drop-in sessions and the online survey can be found in their entirety in Appendices 1 and 2.

6.2 Pupil Numbers

Under this option, pupil numbers at Ae Primary School would continue to attend Nethermill Primary School or an alternative school through parental choice.

The current numbers of catchment children indicate a peak for academic year 2026/27, with the number marginally falling thereafter. Beyond this, numbers are harder to predict due to the young age of children or owing to the fact they have not yet been born. The pupil roll forecast for Ae Primary School based on catchment data as of May 2026 therefore is as follows;

Academic Year	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2025/26	1	3	7	1	7	1	4	2	4	1	20
2026/27				7	1	7	1	4	2	4	26
2027/28				3	7	1	7	1	4	2	25
2028/29				1	3	7	1	7	1	4	24

Figure 11: Pupil Roll Forecast

Experience across Dumfries and Galloway demonstrates that temporary closures can become prolonged. In such circumstances, pupils and families may become embedded within new school communities, reducing the likelihood that rolls would recover sufficiently to justify re-opening at a later date as can be demonstrated by the enrolment data in Section 3.6 Pupil Enrolment.

6.3 Financial Information

Maintaining the status quo would result in the continuation of current revenue and operational efficiencies associated with Ae Primary School. Temporary closure has resulted in a reduction in day-to-day revenue costs associated with staffing, and consumables at Ae Primary School. These savings to the Council have been partially offset by additional costs associated with pupil transport.

In the context of ongoing financial constraints and the Council's statutory duty to secure best value, this option does not provide an opportunity to reduce expenditure in unsustainable areas or to reinvest resources more effectively across the wider school estate.

The total cost of operating Ae Primary School in financial year 2022/23 was approximately £180,000.00.

6.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

6.4.1 Community Impact

Maintaining the current arrangements would result in no immediate change to the impact on the local community. Assuming there was a desire from Ae Community Council and the wider community consideration could be given to request an extension to the existing lease which expires in September 2026.

However, retaining the status quo does not actively respond to the longer-term challenges facing the school or the wider community. Evidence from other rural communities suggests that uncertainty associated with temporary closure can impact community confidence and future decision-making by families, including choices around housing and school enrolment. This may, in turn, undermine the very conditions required to support re-opening.

The temporary nature of this option may limit opportunities for alternative community use of the building, as long-term planning and investment are often constrained where future educational use remains under consideration. As stated in Section 6.0, temporary closure is intended to preserve the school building while allowing time for circumstances to change, Ae Primary School has already been temporarily closed beyond the recommended three-year period.

6.4.2 Travel arrangements

Under this option, there would be no change to the current travel arrangements for pupils attending Nethermill Primary School. Pupils would continue to access education in line with current temporary catchment boundaries and transport eligibility criteria.

The Dumfries and Galloway School Transport Policy 2023 states:

2.2 Dumfries and Galloway Council is required, by law, to arrange transport for pupils living out with a specified statutory distance from their catchment school. Parents are responsible for the first 2 or 3 miles of travel (depending on the age of the child) to the designated pick-up point for onward transportation to their catchment school.

and

Free school transport is awarded from the pick-up point for onward transportation:

- *To pupils under 8 years old who live more than 2 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*
- *To pupils who are 8 years old and over who live more than 3 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*

Existing arrangements are well-established and understood by families. Families that attended the public drop-in sessions spoke positively of the current transport arrangements.

At Secondary level, pupils from the Ae Primary School catchment (inline with the eligibility criteria above) are entitled to transport to Dumfries High School, their peers from the Nethermill Primary School catchment area entitled to transport to Lockerbie Academy. This split secondary catchment and potential for transition to different secondary schools was verbally raised as a concern by some parents attending the drop-in sessions.

6.4.3 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It values the professionalism of Headteachers and their teams and allows them the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to adapt, think critically and flourish in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners. The aim of this curriculum is to develop the four capacities in all of Scotland's learners—effective contributors, confident individuals, successful learners, and responsible citizens—through the four contexts of learning: personal achievement; ethos and life of the school; curriculum areas and subjects; and interdisciplinary learning, while recognising the uniqueness of their local community and context.

Ae and Nethermill Primary Schools are both accessible rural schools (Scottish Government classification) and within ten miles of their local secondary schools, Dumfries High School and Lockerbie Academy. Children from Ae Primary, attending Nethermill Primary continue to benefit from a curriculum design which supports their rural location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs and context. Outdoor learning is a key feature of curricular design at Nethermill Primary School.

Nethermill Primary School consists of two multi-composite classes where children are with peers from more than one year group. The children benefit from a social context where they can build relationships, develop social skills, exercise responsibilities, meet challenges and develop resilience as members of a wider social group. They have the opportunity to influence the direction of the school and their learning experiences through a range of groups and pupil committees. At each stage in Nethermill Primary School there is more than one pupil. As a result, they are able to build relationships with peers which in turn can support their transition into secondary education, however under current temporary arrangements the two catchment areas mean that they have different feeder Secondary Schools.

6.5 Summary

Option 1 would involve the continuation of temporary closure of Ae Primary School, with pupils attending Nethermill Primary School during this period (or another primary school of their choice) as per existing arrangements. While it avoids immediate permanent closure and retains the possibility of reopening, it results in similar impacts to closure in terms of transition, travel and loss of local provision.

Stakeholder feedback indicates limited support, with a desire for pupils to experience small class sizes and minimise transport times. Concerns focus on the impact of the removal of a community facility particularly for the older generation and their social interaction.

From an educational perspective, Nethermill Primary School provides a flexible, rural-focused Curriculum for Excellence that supports individual needs while developing key skills and attributes. Its strong emphasis on outdoor learning and multi-composite classes helps pupils build relationships, resilience, and social skills, while a stable peer group, pupil leadership opportunities, and a supportive community enhance learning and ease transition to secondary school, this option fails to address the two feeder Secondary Schools for each of the catchment areas.

Financially, some savings have already been achieved. In rural terms, this option does not address underlying sustainability challenges and may weaken community confidence over time.

Overall, temporary closure has already been in place for over three years and during this time the number of catchment children has increased however the annual review has out turned little or no desire for pupils to attend.

7.0 Option 2: Reopening of the School

Under this option, Ae Primary School would reopen and the catchment Secondary School would remain as Dumfries High School.

This option would reinstate the school and offer a community space as per previous arrangements prior to the temporary closure. Temporary closure is intended to

preserve the school building while allowing time for circumstances to change, Ae Primary School has already been temporarily closed beyond the recommended three-year period, section 2.5 para 63 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance states;

“The maximum length of the temporary closure’s duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”

The number of catchment children has increased during the period of temporary closure as demonstrated in Figure 12 below, however the annual review as detailed in section 3.6 pupil enrolments demonstrates that there has been little or at times no demand from families wishing to enrol or transfer their children to the school.

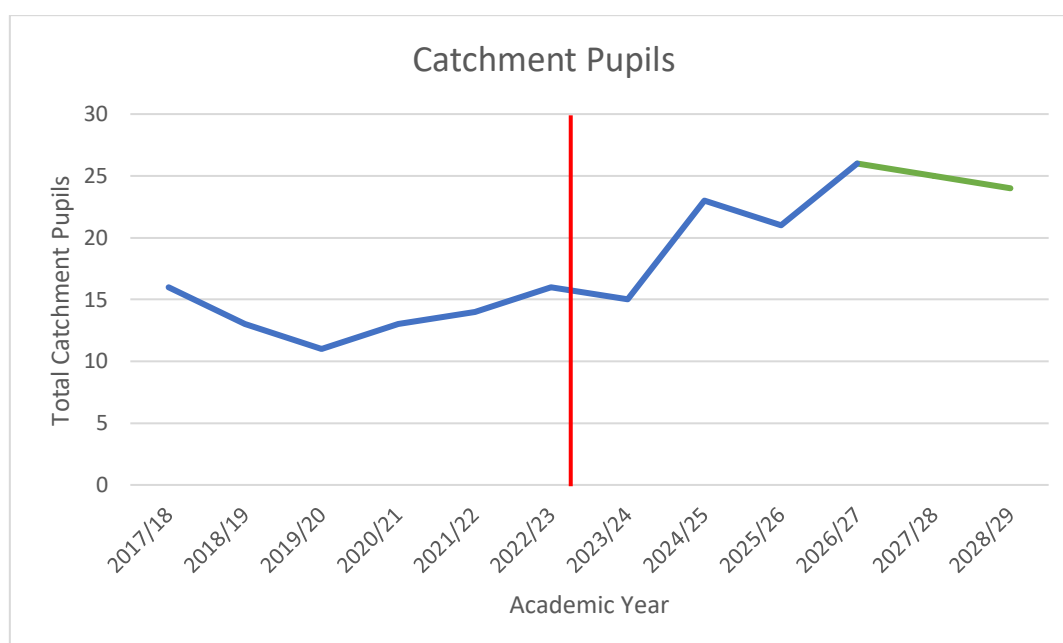


Figure 12: Catchment Pupils

(The red line denotes the point at which the Ae Primary School temporarily closed)

While this option reinstates a community space, it does not guarantee the long term stability of Ae Primary School. These considerations, alongside pupil experience, educational benefit and longer-term planning, are important factors and are explored in more detail in the sections that follow should this option be taken forward for further assessment.

7.1 Community Feedback

Feedback on the reopening option reflected a wide range of views across both the drop-in sessions and the online survey. Stakeholder feedback indicates that reopening Ae Primary School is generally viewed positively across educational, community, and travel considerations, though often with conditions. Respondents highlight the educational benefits of small schools, including personalised learning, early identification of needs, reduced bullying, and strong relationships, while also seeing reopening as a way to attract young families and strengthen community ties. The

school is widely regarded as a key community hub that would help rebuild social connection, reduce isolation, and support the village's long-term sustainability. Reopening is also expected to improve travel arrangements, with many children able to walk to school, reducing reliance on cars and enhancing convenience and safety, alongside broader social benefits for families. However, support is frequently dependent on having sufficient pupil numbers to make the school viable, with some stakeholders expressing concerns about current enrolment levels, the potential disruption to children already settled elsewhere, and possible changes to existing transport arrangements.

Educational Benefits

Stakeholder feedback on the educational benefits of reopening Ae Primary School is mixed but generally supportive in principle. Many respondents view reopening as the preferred or ideal option, highlighting the strong educational advantages of small schools, including more personalised learning, earlier identification of needs, reduced bullying, and stronger relationships between pupils, staff, and the wider community. Reopening is also seen as helping to attract young families, rebuild community cohesion, and reduce travel burdens for children. However, this support is often conditional, with several stakeholders noting that reopening is only viable if there are sufficient pupil numbers, and some feel it is not realistic at present. Others suggest keeping the option open for the future rather than immediate reopening, reflecting concerns about current sustainability and changing enrolments.

Effect on the local community

Stakeholder feedback indicates that reopening Ae Primary School is widely seen as beneficial for the local community, particularly in restoring it as a central hub that fosters connection, inclusion, and community spirit. Many respondents believe it would help bring people together, reduce isolation, and rebuild a sense of identity, with increased interaction between families and stronger relationships among residents. The presence of a local school is also viewed as important for attracting and retaining young families, contributing to the sustainability of the village. However, this support is often conditional, with several stakeholders noting that reopening would only be feasible with sufficient pupil numbers, while others express concerns about disrupting children already settled in other schools.

Effect of any different travel arrangements

Stakeholder feedback indicates that reopening Ae Primary School would generally have a positive impact on travel arrangements, with many noting that most children could walk to school due to its central village location. This would reduce the need for daily car journeys, ease pressure on families—particularly those with limited transport—and improve convenience and safety. Respondents also highlighted wider social benefits linked to local travel, such as children meeting and playing locally and increased interaction among parents. However, as with other areas, support is often conditional on there being enough pupils to make reopening viable, with some viewing it as a future rather than immediate option. A small number of parents verbally raised

their concern around the potential for current transport arrangements to Nethermill Primary School being revoked.

All stakeholder feedback from both the drop-in sessions and the online survey can be found in their entirety in Appendices 1 and 2.

7.2 Pupil Numbers

Under this option, pupil numbers at Ae Primary School would reopen.

The current numbers of catchment children indicate a peak for academic year 2026/27, with the number marginally falling thereafter. Beyond these numbers are harder to predict due to the young age of children or owing to the fact they have not yet been born. The pupil roll forecast for Ae Primary School based on catchment data as of May 2026 therefore is as follows;

Academic Year	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2025/26	1	3	7	1	7	1	4	2	4	1	20
2026/27				7	1	7	1	4	2	4	26
2027/28				3	7	1	7	1	4	2	25
2028/29				1	3	7	1	7	1	4	24

Figure 13: Pupil Roll Forecast

The annual review for enrolment and transfer to Ae Primary School has out turned little or no desire for pupils to attend. Figure 14 below details the outcome of each annual review since Ae Primary School was temporarily closed. It is reasonable to assume that if the school was to reopen the school roll would be two pupils both of which would be in Primary 1 for academic year 2026/27.

Year	Total Pupils
2023/24	0
2024/25	0
2025/26	0
2026/27	2*

Figure 14: Pupil Enrolments

7.3 Financial Information

Reopening Ae Primary School would result in significant cost to Dumfries and Galloway Council to reinstate resources, equipment, staffing and re-establish management arrangements. Staff employed at the time either moved on to other jobs, were redeployed or retired. There would be a reduction in existing transport costs, but these would be minimal particularly if current arrangements were honoured to Nethermill Primary School.

In the context of ongoing financial constraints and the Council's statutory duty to secure best value, this option does not provide an opportunity to reduce expenditure

in unsustainable areas or to reinvest resources more effectively across the wider school estate and would incur significant revenue implications.

The total cost of operating Ae Primary School in financial year 2022/23 was approximately £180,000.00.

7.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

7.4.1 Community Impact

Reopening the school would result in a positive change for the community. Ae Community Council's use of the school building under the current lease would cease and prior arrangements would be reinstated. Ae Primary School would reopen and operate as a focal point for education within the area, contributing to community identity and supporting daily interaction between families, staff and local services.

However, if pupil numbers enrolled at the school do not increase or are unsustainable, this may lead to increased uncertainty for families and staff, and an ongoing erosion of confidence in the sustainability of local provision. The opportunity for enhanced community uses of the building, would not be an option beyond the school lets or lease process.

7.4.2 Travel arrangements

Under this option, there may be changes to the current travel arrangements for pupils attending Nethermill Primary School, as this would no longer be the (temporary) catchment school. Pupils instead be entitled to transport in line with catchment boundaries and transport eligibility criteria.

The Dumfries and Galloway School Transport Policy 2023 states:

2.2 Dumfries and Galloway Council is required, by law, to arrange transport for pupils living out with a specified statutory distance from their catchment school. Parents are responsible for the first 2 or 3 miles of travel (depending on the age of the child) to the designated pick-up point for onward transportation to their catchment school.

and

Free school transport is awarded from the pick-up point for onward transportation:

- To pupils under 8 years old who live more than 2 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*
- To pupils who are 8 years old and over who live more than 3 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*

Existing arrangements are well-established and understood by families. Families that attended the public drop-in sessions spoke positively of the current transport arrangements and the potential disruption of these under this option.

At Secondary level, pupils from the Ae Primary School catchment (in line with the eligibility criteria above) would remain entitled to transport to Dumfries High School.

7.4.3 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It values the professionalism of Headteachers and their teams and allows them the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to adapt, think critically and flourish in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners. The aim of this curriculum is to develop the four capacities in all of Scotland's learners—effective contributors, confident individuals, successful learners, and responsible citizens—through the four contexts of learning: personal achievement; ethos and life of the school; curriculum areas and subjects; and interdisciplinary learning, while recognising the uniqueness of their local community and context.

Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed for the past 3 years due to a significant change/reduction in the school roll. The number of catchment pupils will peak for academic year 2026/27 and have increased during the period of temporary closure. If the school were to re-open, numbers would remain critically low, based on the annual review, indicating a lack of stability for the school and wider school community, which may have a negative impact on staff, pupils and families.

There are no specific educational benefits to reopening Ae Primary School as all schools implement Curriculum for Excellence, ensuring effective learning and teaching which is matched to the needs of the children.

7.5 Summary

Option 2 would involve the reopening of Ae Primary School this would restore the building as a local educational and community facility, but presents significant challenges in terms of sustainability, demand, and cost. Although catchment pupil numbers have risen during the temporary closure period, there has been little evidence of parental demand. While reopening could bring community benefits and reduce some transport needs, it does not ensure long-term viability and may create uncertainty for families and staff if numbers remain unstable. The option would also involve substantial financial investment to re-establish staffing and resources, with limited opportunity to achieve savings or improve wider estate efficiency.

Stakeholder feedback is broadly supportive of reopening Ae Primary School, highlighting benefits such as improved educational experiences in a small school setting, stronger community connections, and reduced travel through walkable

access. Respondents view reopening to rebuild community cohesion, attract families, and enhance daily life. However, this support is often conditional on having sufficient pupil numbers, with some questioning current viability, preferring it as a future option, and raising concerns about potential disruption to existing school placements and transport arrangements.

From an educational perspective, there are no specific advantages to reopening Ae Primary School. Pupils would be taught in small multi-composite year groups until such time that the school roll increases. It is likely that similarly to Nethermill Primary School, Ae Primary School could provide a flexible, rural-focused Curriculum for Excellence that supports individual needs while developing key skills and attributes. All of which could be focused to the context of Ae Village and the community the pupils live in.

Financially, the savings that have been achieved to date could no longer be reached. There would be significant revenue costs associated with the reinstatement of Ae Primary School. A new staffing and management team would need to be established from existing financial resource and would be a reoccurring cost.

Overall, whilst the number children living in the Ae Primary School catchment area has increased during the period temporary closure, the demand for places has not materialised. Reinstating the school would bring a community facility back into use however the school roll for academic 2026/27 would be incredibly low with no certainty over the longer-term viability.

8.0 Option 3: School Closure and re-align the catchment area

Under this option, Ae Primary School would be permanently closed following the outcome of the statutory consultation process in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The primary catchment area (and potentially secondary catchment area) would be permanently realigned. For the purpose of this option it is assumed that the realigned catchment area is that of Nethermill Primary School but as stated above this is dependent on the outcome of the statutory consultation process.

This option would maintain continuity for pupils currently attending Nethermill Primary School and would avoid any immediate change to travel arrangements or schooling patterns, unless an alternative catchment Primary School was proven to be more appropriate. Following closure, the future use of the building would no longer form part of Dumfries and Galloway Council's statutory education provision and would be surplus to requirements. The Council's policy and procedure for dealing with surplus property would then be implemented and that could include looking at community and market interest in the property.

Ae Primary School has been temporarily closed beyond the recommended three-year period, section 2.5 para 63 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance states;

“The maximum length of the temporary closure’s duration is likely to depend on the location of the school and the desirability of maintaining capacity to re-open

a school there, but it is unlikely that it should exceed three years in areas that are not very remote.”

The underlying assumption of this option is that pupil enrolment numbers could increase sufficiently over time to enable Ae Primary School to reopen and pupils to return. The number of catchment children has increased during the period of temporary closure as demonstrated in Figure 15 below, the annual review as detailed in section 3.6 pupil enrolments demonstrates that there has been little or at times no demand from families wishing to enrol or transfer their children to the school.

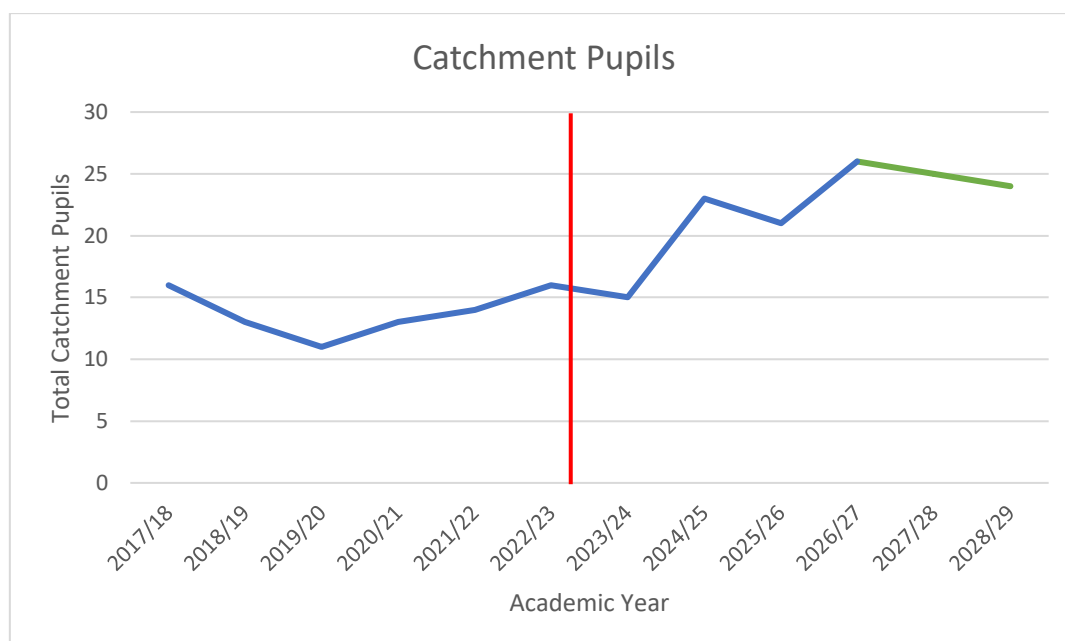


Figure 15: Catchment Pupils

(The red line denotes the point at which the Ae Primary School temporarily closed)

While this option offers long term stability in the short term it removes a community facility from Ae Village. These considerations, alongside pupil experience, educational benefit and longer-term planning, are important factors and are explored in more detail in the sections that follow should this option be taken forward for further assessment.

8.1 Community Feedback

Overall, stakeholders perceive the closure of Ae Primary School as having a significantly negative impact across education, community life, and travel. It is seen as reducing local access to education, limiting parental choice, and disrupting children's learning, particularly through increased travel distances and less reliable transport in a rural setting. At the same time, the loss of the school is viewed as deeply damaging to community cohesion, removing a vital hub that supports social interaction, local identity, and intergenerational connections, ultimately contributing to greater isolation and a decline in the sustainability of the village. To the contrary a small number of stakeholders were supportive with some families stating they did not want further disruption for their children that are now settled at Nethermill Primary School.

Educational Benefits

Feedback from stakeholders suggested that closing Ae Primary School would have largely negative educational impacts. Respondents highlight the loss of local access to education, meaning children must travel further despite having a nearby school building, and the removal of parental choice, particularly the option of small class sizes. There are concerns about disruption to younger children and the loss of opportunities that once attracted families to the area. Overall, closure is seen as reducing the educational offer available to local children and weakening the link between school and community, which previously supported children's learning and development.

Effect on the local community

At the drop-in sessions and through the online survey, stakeholders strongly emphasised the role of Ae Primary School building as a central part of community life. Stakeholders stated that closing Ae Primary School would have a strongly negative effect on the local community, primarily through the loss of a central hub that supports social connection, local events, and intergenerational interaction. The school is seen as vital in bringing people together and maintaining community identity, and its loss would increase isolation, reduce opportunities for engagement, and contribute to a decline in community cohesion. Concerns also include the loss of local jobs, lack of alternative communal spaces, and a growing sense that the village is becoming more fragmented and less sustainable without its school at the centre.

Effect of any different travel arrangements

Closure of Ae Primary School is likely to have a negative impact on travel arrangements, with children required to travel further distances and leave home earlier to attend alternative schools. Feedback highlights concerns about reduced availability of local transport and increased reliance on longer journeys, which may be particularly challenging in a rural area where road closures or unsafe alternative routes can disrupt access and affect the safety and reliability of daily travel.

All stakeholder feedback from both the drop-in sessions and the online survey can be found in their entirety in Appendices 1 and 2.

8.2 Pupil Numbers

Under this option, pupil numbers at Ae Primary School would continue to attend Nethermill Primary School depending on the outcome of the statutory consultation process or an alternative school through parental choice.

The current numbers of catchment children indicate a peak for academic year 2026/27, with the number marginally falling thereafter. Beyond this, numbers are harder to predict due to the young age of children or owing to the fact they have not yet been born. The pupil roll forecast for Ae Primary School based on catchment data as of May 2026 therefore is as follows;

Academic Year	N3	N4	N5	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
2025/26	1	3	7	1	7	1	4	2	4	1	20
2026/27				7	1	7	1	4	2	4	26
2027/28				3	7	1	7	1	4	2	25
2028/29				1	3	7	1	7	1	4	24

Figure 16: Pupil Roll Forecast

There are currently 21 children of P1-P7 age (academic year 2025/26) residing within the catchment area of Ae Primary School (SEEMiS data May 2026). The catchment children are detailed in figure 5 below. These children of primary school age all attend other schools in the area, some as a result of the temporary closure of Ae Primary School, others through parental choice. The catchment pupils attend nine different primary schools in the region, the greatest number of which (7) being at Nethermill Primary School.

8.3 Financial Information

Closure would result in a reduction in day-to-day revenue costs associated with staffing, utilities, and consumables at Ae Primary School, many of these savings have been achieved through the temporary closure period. Any savings to the Council have been partially offset by additional costs associated with pupil transport.

Following closure, the Dumfries and Galloway Council would still require to determine the future use of the building, with potential ongoing costs for maintenance, security and statutory compliance depending on the approach taken.

The total cost of operating Ae Primary School in financial year 2022/23 was approximately £180,000.00.

8.4 Assessment of Rural Factors

8.4.1 Community Impact

Closure would represent a significant change for the communities of Ae Primary School. The loss of a community facility under temporary arrangements would reduce daily activity and remove an important focal point for community life (although the option for a CAT would be available for community consideration).

Evidence from other rural communities suggests that loss of local school provision can impact community confidence and future decision making by families, including choices around housing and school enrolment.

However, this option provides clarity and a definitive outcome, enabling Dumfries and Galloway Council and community to plan for future use of the building and wider provision without the prolonged uncertainty associated with temporary arrangements.

8.4.2 Travel arrangements

Under this option, there would be no change to the current travel arrangements for pupils attending Nethermill Primary School. Pupils would continue to access education in line with current temporary catchment boundaries and transport eligibility criteria.

The Dumfries and Galloway School Transport Policy 2023 states:

2.2 Dumfries and Galloway Council is required, by law, to arrange transport for pupils living out with a specified statutory distance from their catchment school. Parents are responsible for the first 2 or 3 miles of travel (depending on the age of the child) to the designated pick-up point for onward transportation to their catchment school.

and

Free school transport is awarded from the pick-up point for onward transportation:

- To pupils under 8 years old who live more than 2 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*
- To pupils who are 8 years old and over who live more than 3 miles from their catchment school by the shortest walking route.*

Existing arrangements are well-established and understood by families. Families that attended the public drop-in sessions spoke positively of the current transport arrangements.

At Secondary level, pupils from the Ae Primary School catchment (inline with the eligibility criteria above) are entitled to transport to Dumfries High School, their peers from the Nethermill Primary School catchment area are entitled to transport to Lockerbie Academy. Permanent closure and the potential realignment to Nethermill Primary School would change the transport entitlement for secondary education. Current Ae Primary School catchment families already in attendance at Dumfries High School would maintain their existing transport entitlement for existing pupils and any subsequent siblings. All new Secondary School applications would be entitled to transport to Lockerbie Academy.

8.4.3 Educational Benefits

Curriculum for Excellence recognises the unique communities and contexts in which all our schools sit. It values the professionalism of Headteachers and their teams and allows them the flexibility to design a coherent curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and attributes that their learners need to adapt, think critically and flourish in an ever-changing global society. Individual Headteachers and schools are empowered to design and provide an enriched curriculum that is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of individual learners. The aim of this curriculum is to develop the four capacities in all of Scotland's learners—effective contributors,

confident individuals, successful learners, and responsible citizens—through the four contexts of learning: personal achievement; ethos and life of the school; curriculum areas and subjects; and interdisciplinary learning, while recognising the uniqueness of their local community and context.

Ae and Nethermill Primary Schools are both accessible rural schools (Scottish Government classification) and within ten miles of their local secondary schools, Dumfries High School and Lockerbie Academy. Children from Ae Primary, attending Nethermill Primary continue to benefit from a curriculum design which supports their rural location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs and context. Outdoor learning is a key feature of curricular design at Nethermill Primary School.

Nethermill Primary School consists of two multi-composite classes where children are with peers from more than one year group. The children benefit from a social context where they can build relationships, develop social skills, exercise responsibilities, meet challenges and develop resilience as members of a wider social group. They have the opportunity to influence the direction of the school and their learning experiences through a range of groups and pupil committees. At each stage in Nethermill Primary School there is more than one pupil. As a result, they are able to build relationships with peers which in turn can support their transition into secondary education, realigning the catchment area would bring continuity alongside peers for secondary transition to Lockerbie Academy.

8.5 Summary

Option 3 would involve the permanent closure of Ae Primary School, with the catchment area realigned to Nethermill Primary School (depending on the outcome of a full statutory consultation). It would provide continuity and certainty for those pupils already in attendance at Nethermill Primary School.

Stakeholder feedback indicates mixed support with concerns focussed on the loss of the school as a central hub, this is expected to increase isolation, reduce social and community activity, and harm local cohesion and sustainability.

From an educational perspective, Nethermill Primary School provides a flexible, rural-focused Curriculum for Excellence that supports individual needs while developing key skills and attributes. Its strong emphasis on outdoor learning and multi-composite classes helps pupils build relationships, resilience, and social skills, while a stable peer group, pupil leadership opportunities, and a supportive community enhance learning and ease transition to secondary school, including certainty over the secondary catchment.

Financially, some savings have already been achieved during the period of temporary closure.

Overall, pupils are settled into alternative schools and with the temporary closure already been in place for over 3 years, certainty is required. During the period of

temporary closure the number of catchment children has increased however the annual review has out turned little or no desire for pupils to attend.

9. Impact Assessment Screening

Impact assessment screening documents have been completed for each option to provide a consistent and structured evaluation of potential impacts across a range of areas, including protected characteristics, children's rights, health and wellbeing, poverty, environmental sustainability and, critically, economic and social sustainability.

The assessments identify whether impacts are positive, negative or neutral and provide supporting rationale, ensuring all effects are transparently considered.

Particular focus is given to the role Ae Primary School plays as a key community asset, assessing how each option may influence local employment, economic activity, population retention and the viability of other services, alongside its contribution to community cohesion, identity and social wellbeing.

This includes recognising the school's function as a hub for community life and the potential implications of change for rural sustainability, ensuring that decisions are informed not only by educational factors but also by the potential wider economic and social impact on the local community.

All impact assessment screening documents can be found in their entirety in Appendices 3.

10.0 Addressing Depopulation Study

Members of Full Council (Dumfries and Galloway Council) on 26 March 2026 noted the research work commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Council on addressing depopulation in Dumfries and Galloway, which was funded by the Scottish Government as part of their Addressing Depopulation Action Plan and considered and agreed next steps to embed learning from the research and response to this into future council activity and through partnership working.

Dumfries and Galloway Council, 26 March 2026 – Item 10

<https://dumfriesgalloway.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=6524>

In this context, each option for Ae Primary School has been evaluated with regard to its potential impact on the local community, recognising the school's role within the community. Community engagement undertaken through drop-in sessions, stakeholder discussions and the online survey has provided a clear and consistent range of local views, ensuring that lived experience informs this assessment. Within this feedback, depopulation has been referenced as an underlying concern, with stakeholders identifying links between the availability of local services, including education provision and community spaces, and the longer-term sustainability and

attractiveness of the Ae village and the wider Ae Primary School catchment area as a place to live.

11.0 Conclusion

Two alternative options plus closure have been reviewed in considering the future of Ae Primary School. For each option, information was collated, and consideration given to:

- Community feedback;
- Pupil numbers;
- Financial Information;
- Assessment of rural actors, including community impact, and travel arrangements, and
- Educational benefits.

An authority that is formulating a rural school closure proposal must satisfy the preliminary requirements set out in section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended before starting to prepare its proposal paper.

After consideration of the preliminary requirements, as set out in the Act, and the options, and having regard to the specific reasons identified in this report closing Ae Primary School and realigning its catchment area is the most reasonable option in order to address the reasons for the possible proposal. The options for realigning the catchment area will be explored further as part of the Statutory Consultation process.

Members are asked to:

- Note the community engagement undertaken.
- Agree to the commencement of the Statutory Consultation process for the closure of Ae Primary School.

These recommendations will go to Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing Committee on 30 June 2026

Reasonable Alternative to Closure for Ae Secondary School

Preliminary Requirements

Ae Primary School

Tuesday 5th May 2026 and Friday 8th May 2026

Attendance – 12 Stakeholders (including 2 children) across both public drop-in sessions

Option 1 - Status Quo - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

1. Education Benefits

- People with young children would feel more empowered in being able to register their children at Ae still if preferred choice as options still open.
- If children are educated at local school, children and parents are more able to socialise.
- Children benefit from small classes and outdoor activities in community.
- Home made meals made on premises.
- At lot of children benefit from smaller classes. It is ideal for outdoor education classes. Children support each other during and after school with learning as well as the parents. Children being in separate school(s) can affect how they mix with each other and can cause problems with social activities.

1. Effect on the local community

- Fear of unknown for community and planning.
- Impact on people moving to area if unknown with school.
- Senior members unable to meet at schools or get together.
- People are not socialising – children and adults
- Affecting peoples mental health – loneliness, isolation
- Community used to intermingle with the children which no longer happens. The community misses the socialising, mental health suffers.
- Children bring the community together and people will want to be more involved in activities.
- People are worried about how the school being closed and what will become of the building and the area.
- Having lived in the village for more than 40 years and our children have gone to the school, the school has always been at the heart of the village, it would be devastating if the school closed, we would have nothing and no where to meet and hold the village together.
- People will not want to come and stay in the village because the children may feel all their friends are in Dumfries.

1. Effect of any different travel arrangements

- Need to be up earlier for bus.
- Local school easily accessible to walk in a short time.
- Expense of transport to ferry children to 3 different schools.
- Children not [illegible] due to travel arrangement.
- This would lead to people moving out of the village because of disruption to family life.
- Travel costs far more expensive and children have to leave a lot earlier and come home later.
- Can cost of travel be calculated and be compared, i.e. how much does it cost now to transport children to school in other areas? There are now busses and taxis which will be expensive.

Option 2 – Closure – Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

2. Education Benefits

- My children are settled in their current setting for education so would not want to disrupt this so would affect younger children more.
- Feel the educational benefits have been taken away from parents wanting to bring their children here.
- A choice has been taken away from parents and children, the school in the past has attracted families to the village, families keep the village alive, children benefit from smaller classes.

2. Effect on the local community

- Loss of community hub, increased social isolation and further travel for child education, if building remained in community hands then this would support community use and hub.
- The loss of the school would be devastating to the community. With the loss of a warm welcoming hub. It would lead to more social isolation, with no meeting place.
- Terrible effect on the community- would make us even more isolated.
- Loss of jobs at school.
- School always invited elderly community to Christmas parties etc.
- The school brings all generations together and without it some older people miss out on seeing young people.
- The school holds events (did hold events) which brings people together.

2. Effect of any different travel arrangements

- Potential for less local transport for children and community members.
- Impact like recently when road shut off getting children safely to schools as alternative routes unsafe for transport.

- Chance of less transport for children. Some of the children have had already had to move school. The children have to leave a lot earlier.

Option 3 – Re-open Ae Primary School

3. Education Benefits

- Small schools are brilliant assets in D&G and provide a lot of educational benefits.
- Children don't get missed in a small school.
- Educational problems were picked up sooner.
- Less bullying – things were sorted quickly.
- Small schools are good for all aspects of education. We have garden beds and a poly tunnel which was used well. Children with needs can be well catered for.

3. Effect on the local community

- The kids and community would know each other more, concern from my kids they would need to move school.
- Increased community support and less isolation.
- Bring community together again.
- Social inclusion.
- The chatter and playing are a great and refreshing sound to the community it is a great miss. It would bring the heart back into the community.

3. Effect of any different travel arrangements

- Little effect as most children could walk to the school from village.
- Children can walk to school, meet at the park after school, parents chat to each other. The chatter and enjoying the children playing is so refreshing, we miss that!

Other reasonable alternatives

- Could school be used for other educational needs – sport, nature, gardening, cycling
- If it was used for more houses where are the children going to go.
- It could be used for a great outdoor centre
- Forrest walks, outdoor classrooms etc.
- Parties.
- Sales to help build community.
- Activities for occasions like, Halloween and Easter.
- After school activities learning.
- Local history and archive.
- Community hub.
- Sports activities, picnics, gym, hiking group.
- Fitness classes e.g. Zumba

- Library or book club.
- Computer club (for us older people)
- Wider advertising to bring people in to use school.
- The image below is a pictorial representation from a child who attend the public meeting. They foresee the room used for parties, with a party room, eating room, as well as an archive/history room space.



View results

Respondent

3

Anonymous

06:19

Time to complete

1. This survey does not currently form part of any statutory consultation process in relation to the potential closure of Ae Primary School but responses may be retained by Dumfries and Galloway Council for use in any statutory consultation under The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Do you agree to any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process that may be undertaken and published in the final Consultation Report? (Please note all other personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes☐ No

2. Please detail your postcode below (<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/privacy>) *

3. Please select your relationship to Ae Primary School *

☒ Current parent/carer of a Ae Primary School catchment child(ren) (Primary, Nursery or Pre-Nursery)☐ Former Teacher/Staff member at Ae Primary School☐ Former pupil at Ae Primary School☐ Former Parent☐ Member of the Community☐ Community Group or Organisation Representative☐ Other

Reasonable Alternatives

As part of the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, we are seeking your views on reasonable alternatives to closure.

You are invited to propose additional alternatives; however, these must meet the requirements of the Act by being reasonable, clearly explained, and capable of addressing the identified challenges, including educational benefits, community impact and travel considerations.

In line with the statutory guidance (available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2dwjsysk>), please focus any comments below on how each option may affect children's educational experiences, the impact it may have on the local community, and any implications for travel arrangements.

4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

No answer provided.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

Yes

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☐ Amisfield Primary School
- ☒ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

Community asset transfer to community council

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

No

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

I am shocked at the suggestion of another catchment for the local children. The catchment is nethermill since the mothballing which was extremely traumatic event for the children. It would be unfair and wrong to propose an alternative catchment once the kids are settled in their nethermill and transport arranged for them.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

5 Anonymous

06:54

Time to complete

1. This survey does not currently form part of any statutory consultation process in relation to the potential closure of Ae Primary School but responses may be retained by Dumfries and Galloway Council for use in any statutory consultation under The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Do you agree to any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process that may be undertaken and published in the final Consultation Report? (Please note all other personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2. Please detail your postcode below (<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/privacy>) *

3. Please select your relationship to Ae Primary School *

☐ Current parent/carer of a Ae Primary School catchment child(ren) (Primary, Nursery or Pre-Nursery)

☐ Former Teacher/Staff member at Ae Primary School

☐ Former pupil at Ae Primary School

☐ Former Parent

☒ Member of the Community

☐ Community Group or Organisation Representative

☐ Other

Reasonable Alternatives

As part of the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, we are seeking your views on reasonable alternatives to closure.

You are invited to propose additional alternatives; however, these must meet the requirements of the Act by being reasonable, clearly explained, and capable of addressing the identified challenges, including educational benefits, community impact and travel considerations.

In line with the statutory guidance (available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2dwjsysk>), please focus any comments below on how each option may affect children's educational experiences, the impact it may have on the local community, and any implications for travel arrangements.

4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

Yes - these things take time. Retain it as a functional facility where education can return to and meantime retain it as the heart of our community. Without access and use we have nothing.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

I agree to consult but cannot see any positive to closure of this small rural school.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☐ Amisfield Primary School
- ☐ Nethermill Primary School
- ☒ This decision should not be reached. Keep available for longer.

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

Council work with community to ensure we have a viable and sustainable community space.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

Yes - but not right now. Need to keep as an option so we can encourage families to settle here - without even the option of a school that opportunity is gone.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

Split use - school and community. Split the costs to make it more viable.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

No answer provided.

View results

Respondent

6

Anonymous

13:59

Time to complete

1. This survey does not currently form part of any statutory consultation process in relation to the potential closure of Ae Primary School but responses may be retained by Dumfries and Galloway Council for use in any statutory consultation under The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Do you agree to any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process that may be undertaken and published in the final Consultation Report? (Please note all other personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2. Please detail your postcode below (<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/privacy>) *

3. Please select your relationship to Ae Primary School *

☐ Current parent/carer of a Ae Primary School catchment child(ren) (Primary, Nursery or Pre-Nursery)

☐ Former Teacher/Staff member at Ae Primary School

☐ Former pupil at Ae Primary School

☐ Former Parent

☒ Member of the Community

☐ Community Group or Organisation Representative

☐ Other

Reasonable Alternatives

As part of the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, we are seeking your views on reasonable alternatives to closure.

You are invited to propose additional alternatives; however, these must meet the requirements of the Act by being reasonable, clearly explained, and capable of addressing the identified challenges, including educational benefits, community impact and travel considerations.

In line with the statutory guidance (available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2dwjsysk>), please focus any comments below on how each option may affect children's educational experiences, the impact it may have on the local community, and any implications for travel arrangements.

4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

This seems the best current plan. We realise that there are not enough children that want to return but that there are younger children in the village coming up for P1 that may wish to come in the future.
With the cafe closed and no other buildings in the vicinity, temporary closure and use and its use as a community hub is working well. I'd also like to see the building used for other educational purposes such as using the outdoor teaching space down the back or access to the forwat. Or providing kids clubs or youth activities.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

Closing the building means that the community would have zero access to any communal facility or building. The forest cafe has now closed and won't be relet. If the building was closed and sold off it would mean the community (both the village and now the forest/bike community) would become even more disparate. The community council are doing a good job of managing it but wouldn't have the experience to turn it into a full time hub without council support. The village would have nothing.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

No answer provided.

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

As suggested above. A community and forest hub. Potentially also for use with youth clubs or by other schools for outdoor access.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

Unlikely currently until there are new p1 children coming through.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

Shared between council/ third sector/educational/community groups as a meeting space/hub and occasional classroom facility.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

7

Anonymous

15:09

Time to complete

1. This survey does not currently form part of any statutory consultation process in relation to the potential closure of Ae Primary School but responses may be retained by Dumfries and Galloway Council for use in any statutory consultation under The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Do you agree to any statement/comments being published as part of the Statutory Consultation process that may be undertaken and published in the final Consultation Report? (Please note all other personal information will be redacted) *

☒ Yes

☐ No

2. Please detail your postcode below (<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/privacy>) *

3. Please select your relationship to Ae Primary School *

☐ Current parent/carer of a Ae Primary School catchment child(ren) (Primary, Nursery or Pre-Nursery)

☐ Former Teacher/Staff member at Ae Primary School

☐ Former pupil at Ae Primary School

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☒ Member of the Community

☐ Community Group or Organisation Representative

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Reasonable Alternatives

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

Yes

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☐ Amisfield Primary School
- ☒ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

I would suggest the following as there are no other buildings for these.
Community council and other community meetings
Educational programmes for children and adults
Fun and fitness activities

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

This would be ideal if enough children to do this

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

The building needs to be kept open as it's a meeting place for the community which is widespread. Many members of the community are unable to travel as they do not have transport so would be unable to attend community meetings etc. it is a hub and a must for the community.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

8

Anonymous

56:40

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

The building will deteriorate if not in full use, therefore it seems uneconomical for it to remain temporarily closed after so much money was put into upgrading it. A building which is barely in use has a negative impact on the community and is a security risk.

The status quo has meant parents have been put off applying for their children to go to Ae Primary as it already 'appears' to be closed. Therefore the advantages of having a local school without need for travelling or associated costs are not being fulfilled. The issues surrounding the school need to be addressed now, although I think the degree of apathy is strong.

This is my least preferred option.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

Closure of the school, even on the temporary basis to date, has had a detrimental effect on the village. There is less sense of community and the benefits for educating children in, what was formerly, a thriving village school have been lost. The village has lost its focus and the community is no longer involved in the local children's activities e.g. concerts, sponsored walks and outings. Already, it seems that families do not mix as much and get to know one another, which as a long-term resident of Ae Village, former parent and volunteer at the school, is not how the village previously functioned. This would, in my opinion, be the second best option.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☒ Amisfield Primary School
- ☐ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

The school building could be used by the educational community to support the needs of pupils with learning difficulties in a secluded and peaceful environment, which has convenient access to Ae Forest. Perhaps, the building could be a base for outdoor learning activities for young people in general. I do not feel, that the community of Ae, itself, has the required motivation or resources to take on a Community Asset Transfer of the building.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

To re-open Ae Primary School would help to return the joy, energy, commitment and loyalty to the community of Ae. Local children could develop stronger bonds with their neighbours and benefit from a very dedicated and varied learning experience. The smaller class sizes meant more personalised learning. In addition, some of the staff and volunteers were often members of the community too. Ae Primary used to be a welcoming and central hub for the different generations living in Ae Village and there was a shorter distance to travel to school for the majority of pupils. This is my preferred option.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

As stated above, the school building could be used by the educational community to support the needs of pupils with learning difficulties in a secluded and peaceful environment, which has convenient access to Ae Forest. Perhaps, the building could be a base for outdoor learning activities for young people in general. I do not feel, that the community of Ae, itself, has the required motivation or resources to take on a Community Asset Transfer of the building.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

9 Anonymous

08:47

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

No answer provided.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No answer provided.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

No answer provided.

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

For it to become a community hub/village hall, as Ae Village currently has no such permanent facility.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

No answer provided.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

No answer provided.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

10

Anonymous

06:59

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

Children should go to there local schools

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

Children should go to there local schools

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☒ Amisfield Primary School
- ☐ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

I think the building should remain open for the community to do things in as they have nothing in ae village for people to meet,no one wants loneliness

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

Yes I think it should be build back up a community

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

People should try and encourage there children going to there local schools build back up a community in small villages,

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

11

Anonymous

31:08

Time to complete

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☐ No

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

I do not have kids at school so i have no input for this. However i feel its a major loss for the community

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No answer provided.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☒ Amisfield Primary School
- ☐ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

The Ae village has a very big issue going forward if the school were to close and be sold. The community does not have a village hall and so the school is a lifeline for the community to be able to hold various events throughout the year for the children to the elderly (including childrens xmas party, xmas light switch on, yoga, all sorts group who meet once a month, community council meetings, as well as other events for the community. The importance of these events are crucial to enable the community to retain the social events. The Cafe and bike shop have recently closed which takes away another resource that the community would use for social gatherings.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

I do think the amount of money that has been spent on upgrading Ae school to close it is such a waste of money, whilst other schools in the area have not had the same investment and may need in the near future. It maybe something that needs to be considered if budgets are tight.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

It would be great if the school could remain as part of the community. With the children growing up in the Ae now being scattered by attending alternative schools it is so important that we are still able to have a place that they can have a community experience with having a meeting place for community events. The elderly also rely on being able to meet up through All sorts or Yoga group which stops social isolation. I know the proposal is about the community taking on the school as a community asset but there is so much red tape that need to go through it is off putting for people.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

12

Anonymous

03:04

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

No answer provided.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

I don't think total closure should be an option. The school should remain a venue for whatever village community purpose required.....as there are no other suitable alternatives.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

No answer provided.

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

No answer provided.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

This would obviously be the best option if there were enough pupils to attend.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

No answer provided.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

13

Anonymous

12:46

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

No I would like it to re open

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No I would like it to re open

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

☐ Amisfield Primary School

☒ Nethermill Primary School

☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

Something for the community, a lot of money was spent on the building and it would be a waste of a good building

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

I believe the school should reopen as there is clearly young children residing in Ae village and the difficulty in having to drive to school twice a day is not great for young family's who only have one car and they have to use that for work. We should be encouraging village life children should be able to walk to school and have a great start in life, especially as everything is already here.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

No answer provided.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

14

Anonymous

07:13

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

I think Ae Primary is an ideal location to be able to close 2/3 smaller schools and combine into one. Also the generation of Ae Village is changing, which shows when there was 7 P1's in the catchment this year.

I personally think the location of Ae primary is a safer location for children to be dropped off/picked up than others on the side of a busy road.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No answer provided.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

No answer provided.

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

I do think the village needs a community hub for classes/parties/events. With the forestry commission not wanting a cafe to reopen in the forest, I feel there is no where else for the community to meet now.

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

Now my children are enrolled into a School, I don't think I would move them again unless 2/3 smaller schools are amalgamated into one.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

I do feel the school not being there for the community will affect the older generation of the village to be able to meet. I have also suggested, if anyone was happy in doing so, to maybe open a small cafe in the kitchen area which may generate funds to cover running costs if the community took it on.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

No answer provided.

View results

Respondent

15

Anonymous

07:31

Time to complete

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4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

Yes

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☐ Amisfield Primary School
- ☒ Nethermill Primary School
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7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

It would be good if the Council, in conjunction with the community, could ensure that the premises be used for the community

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

This would be my preferred option, as it would help encourage young families to live in the area.

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

A partnership between the Council and the community, to benefit the area and those who live here; encouraging such organisations as the Scout Movement and others to work with children and young people; setting up other groups for the people in the area

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

View results

Respondent

17

Anonymous

02:58

Time to complete

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☐ No

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As part of the preliminary requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, we are seeking your views on reasonable alternatives to closure.

You are invited to propose additional alternatives; however, these must meet the requirements of the Act by being reasonable, clearly explained, and capable of addressing the identified challenges, including educational benefits, community impact and travel considerations.

In line with the statutory guidance (available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2dwjsysk>), please focus any comments below on how each option may affect children's educational experiences, the impact it may have on the local community, and any implications for travel arrangements.

4. **Status Quo** - Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed

No answer provided.

5. **Closure** - Statutory consultation on a proposal to close Ae Primary School and re-align the catchment area.

No answer provided.

6. If a decision was taken to progress to Statutory Consultation for the closure of Ae Primary School, where should the school catchment area be realigned to?

- ☒ Amisfield Primary School
- ☐ Nethermill Primary School
- ☐ Other

7. If a decision was taken to close Ae Primary School, do you have any suggestions for the future use of the building? please detail them below. (Dumfries and Galloway Council understand that the current lease expires in September 2026 and Ae Community Council are, in conjunction with the wider community going to consider the most appropriate next steps)

Ae Community Council take on the building

8. **Re-open** Ae Primary School.

In the ideal world

9. **Other Reasonable Alternative** - please detail your new proposal below, focussing on educational benefit, impact on local community and travel implications.

No answer provided.

10. Please provide your email address below to allow us to communicate further regarding Ae Primary School (optional).

[REDACTED]

Impact Assessment Screening Document

Option Title		1. Status Quo – Ae Primary School remains temporarily closed with the temporary catchment area remaining as Nethermill Primary School		
Directorate(s)		Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing		
Service(s)		Education		
Lead Officer		Louise Rae		
Completed by – <i>(insert names of all at panel)</i>		Kevin Williamson Andy Margerison Louise Rae Linsey Little Scott McMeeken Derek Hextall		
Date Completed -		09/06/2026		
Impact Area	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Rationale
Age	✓		✓	Potential impact – temporarily removes primary provision S1 transition occurs to different catchment secondary schools. Larger peer cohort may benefit age-appropriate social interaction, although impact will vary by individual Longer school day for some pupils due to travel requirements School remains an option for future enrolment and transfer
Disability		✓		
Sex		✓		
Gender reassignment and Transgender		✓		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy and Maternity		✓		

Race		✓		
Religion or belief		✓		
Sexual orientation		✓		
Human Rights		✓		
Children's Rights	✓		✓	Potential impact – balances benefits of smaller school settings with wider opportunities available in a larger small school (Articles 28, 29) Potentially against the preference of a small number of pupils/families (Article 12)
Care Experienced Young People		✓		
British Sign Language Users		✓		
Armed Forces and Veterans		✓		
Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities			✓	Potential impact –extended school day may affect mental wellbeing for some pupils Possible mental health and wellbeing due to future uncertainty.
Poverty			✓	Potential impact – increased transport costs for some families Transport provided for eligible pupils; however, additional costs may be incurred for attending school events
Economic and Social Sustainability	✓		✓	Negative impact – removal of primary school provision Loss of local employment opportunities associated with the school Loss of a public-facing community building

				Staff have already been redeployed
				Potential reduction in attractiveness of the local area for families
Consumer Duty		✓		
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	✓		✓	Negative impact – increased transport requirements and associated emissions Potential efficiency – transport of larger pupil groups may improve economy of scale Positive impact – greater operational efficiencies within a larger secondary school Positive impact – reduced energy consumption from temporary closure of Ae Primary School
Total -	4	13	6	

Summary of Impacts

Positive Impact	4
No Impact	13
Negative Impact	6

Negative Impacts

If any negative impact(s) have been identified choose the most appropriate option below (a, b or c). Once you have identified your option, record your decision in the table below highlighting the Impact Area and action to be taken.

- a. **unjustifiable**
- b. **can be justified**
- c. **may or may not be justifiable**

Impact Area	Option (a), (b) or (c)	Explanation and action to be taken
Age	b	Temporary closure removes local primary provision within Ae. However, pupils are already accessing education

		elsewhere in the region, in schools with larger rolls/peer groups. Annual reviews provide enrolment and transfer opportunities.
Children's Rights	b	Pupils may benefit from larger peer groups and less year groups in a composite class, along with potential wider opportunities. However, this may not align with the preference of all pupils/families.
Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities	b	Clear communication to families and communities regarding period of time for extended temporary closure. Receiving schools to be aware and monitor impact throughout the day.
Poverty	c	Increased travel and participation in school activities may result in additional costs for some families. Transport is provided where eligible, but some costs may remain.
Economic and Social Sustainability	c	Closure removes a local school and associated employment and community use. Education provision continues elsewhere, but there may have been and continue to be local community impact.
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	b	Increased travel may result in higher emissions. However, use of a larger school may improve operational efficiency overall. Impact depends on travel patterns and should be considered in planning.

Impact Assessment Screening Document

Option Title		2. Reopen Ae Primary School		
Directorate(s)		Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing		
Service(s)		Education		
Lead Officer		Louise Rae		
Completed by – (insert names of all at panel)		Kevin Williamson Louise Rae Linsey Little Scott McMeeken Derek Hextall Andy Margerison		
Date Completed -		09/06/2026		
Impact Area	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Rationale
Age	✓		✓	Reinstates a primary school option for families Reversal in catchment for current pupils Smaller class size and peer groups welcomed by some pupils Building civic pride of pupils in own community with local school Potential limitation in peer socialisation opportunities
Disability	✓		✓	No differential impact – no change to current arrangements for pupils with disabilities Potential change to routine or learning environment for neurodiverse pupils. Ae Primary School is an accessible building.
Sex		✓		
Gender reassignment and Transgender		✓		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓		

Pregnancy and Maternity		✓		
Race		✓		
Religion or belief		✓		
Sexual orientation		✓		
Human Rights		✓		
Children's Rights	✓		✓	Supports sense of belonging within the local community (Article 8) Potential limited opportunities for extra-curricular participation due to low pupil numbers (Article 31) Potential limitation in peer socialisation opportunities (Articles 15, 31)
Care Experienced Young People		✓		No change to current arrangements.
British Sign Language Users		✓		
Armed Forces and Veterans		✓		
Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities	✓		✓	No differential impact – maintains existing arrangements for pupils Risk of isolation for staff and pupils Potential requirement for staff lone working Potential smaller cohort size may support wellbeing for some pupils and staff Potential impact on mental health linked to limited peer interaction (positive and negative) Impact on mental health for low pupil numbers and potential for future discussions over sustainability

Poverty	✓		✓	Potential impact on additional transport requirements for families given the reinstatement of the catchment primary school if they chose to remain at their current schools. Reinstates a school within the village, families living within the village have easy access. May need to purchase new school uniform.
Economic and Social Sustainability	✓			Reinstates a small number of employment opportunities at Ae Primary School Retains a facility able to host community social events in the community
Consumer Duty		✓		
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	✓		✓	Negative impact – ongoing energy inefficiency associated with operating a large building for a small pupil roll Potential reduction to transport-related emissions depending on parental choice of school
Total -	7	12	6	

Summary of Impacts

Positive Impact	7
No Impact	12
Negative Impact	6

Negative Impacts

If any negative impact(s) have been identified choose the most appropriate option below (a, b or c). Once you have identified your option, record your decision in the table below highlighting the Impact Area and action to be taken.

a. unjustifiable

- b. can be justified
- c. may or may not be justifiable

Impact Area	Option (a), (b) or (c)	Explanation and action to be taken
Age	b	Reinstates local provision but may generate disruption and change for pupils. However, very low pupil numbers initially but no indication of roll growth. Ongoing monitoring of roll would be required.
Disability	c	Potential change to routine or learning environment for neurodiverse pupils that move to Ae Primary School but this would be managed with careful transition processes.
Children's Rights	c	Local provision is reinstated and provides a choice for parents. However, reduced peer interaction mean some aspects of children's rights may not be fully met.
Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities	c	Smaller numbers can benefit some pupils, but there is an ongoing risk of isolation for pupils and staff. Impacts may vary by individual.
Poverty	c	Potential removal of existing transport arrangements due to the change in catchment school. Consideration may be given over honouring existing travel arrangements.
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	b	Operating a building for a small number of pupils is inefficient with the potential for community use. Transport emissions may remain if existing transport is honoured despite the potential for reduced car journeys.

Impact Assessment Screening Document

Option Title			3. Closure and re-align catchment area to Nethermill Primary School	
Directorate(s)			Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	
Service(s)			Education	
Lead Officer			Louise Rae	
Completed by – (insert names of all at panel)			Kevin Williamson Louise Rae Linsey Little Scott McMeeken Derek Hextall	
Date Completed -			09/06/2026	
Impact Area	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Rationale
Age	✓		✓	Negative impact – permanently removes a primary school as an option for families P7 - S1 transition occurs alongside a larger peer group with the same secondary catchment school Larger peer cohort may benefit social interaction, although impact will vary by individual
Disability		✓		
Sex		✓		
Gender reassignment and Transgender		✓		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy and Maternity		✓		
Race		✓		
Religion or belief		✓		
Sexual orientation		✓		
Human Rights		✓		
Children's Rights	✓		✓	Positive impact – wider educational opportunities available within a larger

				school environment (Articles 28, 29) Against the preference some pupils/families (Article 12)
Care Experienced Young People		✓		
British Sign Language Users		✓		
Armed Forces and Veterans		✓		
Health and Wellbeing and Health Inequalities		✓		
Poverty			✓	Potential impact – increased transport costs for some families Transport provided for eligible pupils; however, additional costs may be incurred for attending school events
Economic and Social Sustainability			✓	Negative impact – removal of primary school provision and a community facility. Loss of local employment opportunities associated with the school Loss of a public-facing community building There could be the opportunity to look into community interest in the building.
Consumer Duty		✓		
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	✓		✓	Negative impact – increased transport requirements and associated emissions Positive impact – greater operational efficiencies

				within a larger secondary school
Total -	3	14	5	

Summary of Impacts

Positive Impact	3
No Impact	14
Negative Impact	5

Negative Impacts

If any negative impact(s) have been identified choose the most appropriate option below (a, b or c). Once you have identified your option, record your decision in the table below highlighting the Impact Area and action to be taken.

- a. **unjustifiable**
- b. **can be justified**
- c. **may or may not be justifiable**

Impact Area	Option (a), (b) or (c)	Explanation and action to be taken
Age	b	Closure removes local primary provision within. However, pupils are already accessing education elsewhere in the region, in schools with larger rolls/peer groups.
Children's Rights	b	Pupils benefit from larger peer groups and less year groups in a composite class, along with wider opportunities. However, this may not align with the preference of all pupils/families.
Poverty	c	Increased travel and participation in school activities may result in additional costs for some families. Transport is provided where eligible, but some costs may remain.
Economic and Social Sustainability	c	Closure removes a local school and associated employment and community use. Education provision continues elsewhere, but there may have been and continue to be local community impact. There could be the opportunity to look into community interest in the building.
Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Management	c	Increased travel may result in higher emissions. However, use of a larger school may improve operational efficiency overall. Impact depends on

		travel patterns and should be considered in planning.
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