

The purpose of the "Right School, Right Place" Communication and Engagement Plan is to support evidence-based decision-making about the future of Dumfries and Galloway's learning estate through early, transparent and meaningful engagement with children and young people, families, staff, communities and stakeholders.

It seeks to ensure that local knowledge and lived experience help inform future learning estate changes, while maintaining a clear focus on securing high-quality, sustainable educational provision that meets the needs of current and future generations.

To support meaningful participation and maintain confidence in the process, the council will:

- Clearly explain the purpose of engagement and what stakeholders can influence.
- Build on previous engagement and available evidence to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue.
- Remove barriers to participation through accessible information and a range of engagement methods.
- Provide regular updates on next steps and decision-making.
- Publish engagement findings and explain how feedback has informed options, recommendations and decisions.

School Investment - Investing in learning environments to support educational outcomes, wellbeing and sustainability

Who is involved?

The engagement process should involve those who are directly affected by investment decisions and can provide insight into the condition, suitability and functionality of learning environments. This may include pupils and young people, parents and carers, parent councils, school staff, elected members, community groups and relevant council services. Their involvement will help ensure investment priorities are informed by educational needs, local circumstances and community aspirations.

How will we engage?

Engagement methods may include school communications, surveys, pupil discussions, parent council engagement, community drop-in sessions, and stakeholder workshops. The methods used will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the investment and provide opportunities for stakeholders to identify priorities and provide feedback on proposed improvements to their school.

Option Appraisal - Gathering evidence and considering future options for a school

Who is involved?

The engagement process should involve stakeholders who can contribute to understanding current provision, future needs and range of potential options. This may include pupils and young people, parents and carers, parent councils, school staff, community councils, elected members, community organisations and other relevant council services. Engagement should seek to capture a broad range of perspectives, experiences and local knowledge.

How will we engage?

Engagement methods may include public engagement events, online surveys, stakeholder workshops, drop-in information sessions and published briefings. These approaches support two-way dialogue, help stakeholders understand the evidence being considered and provide opportunities to explore views, concerns and potential alternatives before options are developed.

Statutory Consultation - Seeking views on a proposed permanent change to the school estate before a decision is made

Who is involved?

The consultation process will involve all statutory consultees identified within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, including pupils, parents and carers, parent councils, school staff, trade union representatives and community councils. Opportunities to participate will also be available to local residents, community organisations, elected members and other interested stakeholders.

How will we engage?

Engagement methods will include publication of a proposal paper, direct notification to statutory consultees, a dedicated consultation webpage, public meetings, online surveys, school communications and GovDelivery updates. These methods will provide formal opportunities for stakeholders to comment on the proposal, reasonable alternatives and potential impacts prior to any final decision being taken by elected members. The statutory consultation process is described on the next page.

Temporary School Closure (Mothballing) – Managing periods when a school has no pupils enrolled

Who is involved?

Pupils and families, school staff, parent councils, community councils, elected members and relevant council services, as appropriate.

How will we engage?

Communication activity will be planned around the circumstances of each temporary closure. It should include clear information about the reason for the closure, the decision-making process, arrangements for affected pupils, how and when the position will be reviewed and how any subsequent decision will be communicated. Directly affected pupils, parents and carers, staff and relevant elected members should receive timely information through the most appropriate channels. Parent councils, community councils and wider communities should also be kept informed at relevant stages, where appropriate. If a permanent change is subsequently proposed, this will follow the separate statutory consultation process described on the next page.

Right School, Right Place: School Consultation and Decision-Making Process

The council recognises that proposals affecting schools are important to children and young people, families, staff and communities. Where a permanent change to the school estate is proposed, the council must follow the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. This provides opportunities for stakeholders to consider the proposal, ask questions and share their views before elected members make a final decision. Information will be provided to pupils and young people, parents and carers, staff, parent councils, community councils, elected members and wider communities at the stages relevant to them through school communications, press notifications, public meetings, council webpages and email and GovDelivery updates. The method and timing of communication will reflect the stage of the process and the needs of each audience. Some school estate decisions, such as temporary school closures (previously referred to as ‘mothballing’), are managed through separate council procedures and do not follow the statutory consultation process set out below.



Throughout the process, the council will provide clear and accessible information, offer opportunities for meaningful participation, engage with children and young people appropriately, provide updates on progress and next steps, and explain how stakeholder feedback has informed recommendations and decisions.