

## Northfield Primary Schools Feasibility Study

March to June 2023

### Frequently Asked Questions

Version 2 - Last Updated: 29 May 2023

Listed below are the questions which have been frequently asked by stakeholders in the feedback we have received so far, along with Council officers' responses to these questions. This list will be updated regularly as new questions are received.

1. Why are school closures being proposed?

Pupil numbers at some of the schools in Northfield are well below the available capacity at these schools, so they each have a significant amount of unused space within them. The pupil numbers are expected to continue to fall significantly over the next seven years, and this could have a negative impact on learning and teaching, and the opportunities available to pupils. If all of the schools stay open, the Council would have to continue to spend money on running and maintaining large parts of buildings which are not required for learning and teaching.

2. Which schools are likely to close, and where would the children from these schools go?

No decisions have been made about which school or schools would close. The feasibility study is the start of the process to find out what the options would be, and to understand which option would have most benefit. A report will then be presented to councillors who will make a decision on whether to consider a school closure.

After this, if there is a proposal to close a particular school, there would need to be a further public consultation before councillors would make a final decision on whether the school should close. Any proposal to close a school would need to include the detailed arrangements for the children in the school, and which other school(s) they would be able to move to.

3. What are the timescales for the feasibility study, and when will decisions be made?

The feasibility study and stakeholder engagement will continue until Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023. A report on the findings of the feasibility study, which is expected to include a recommended option, will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The Committee will decide whether to accept the recommended option, and if they agree to go ahead with a proposed school closure, there will be a public consultation, probably in Autumn/Winter 2023/24. A final decision on whether to close the school would then be taken after the consultation, likely to be in Spring 2024.

4. If a school is closed, will class sizes increase at the other schools?

If a school is closed and pupils are moved to other existing schools in the area, this may mean that the existing schools will have more classes in them, if they have spare classroom spaces available, to accommodate the additional children. If the existing schools currently have small classes, it may mean these will need to be slightly larger, but the classes cannot legally go higher than the maximum class sizes which are set by Scottish Government. No classes in any primary schools can be larger than the following maximum sizes:

- Primary 1 classes: no more than 25 pupils
- Primary 2 and Primary 3 classes: no more than 30 pupils
- Primary 4, Primary 5, Primary 6 and Primary 7 classes: no more than 33 pupils
- Composite classes (classes with more than one year group in them): no more than 25 pupils

5. Have the planned new houses in the area been taken into account?

Yes, our school roll forecasts, which are used to predict how many pupils will attend each school in the future, take account of planned new houses in each school's catchment area, to calculate how many extra children are likely to be living in those houses and who will require a place at the school.

Our school roll forecasts can be found here: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/schools-and-education/schools-pupil-roll-forecasts>. In each school's forecast table, there is a "Housing" line which shows the number of new houses which are expected to be built in the school's catchment area each year.

New questions added 29/05/23:

6. If my child's school closes, will they still receive the same level of support for their additional needs?

If a decision is taken to close a school, then the individual needs of children at that school will be carefully considered when planning their transition to the new school. Children will receive the appropriate support regardless of which school they are attending.

7. Why is there a proposal to close schools, when overall pupil numbers in the city are rising?

Over the past year we have seen a significant rise in pupil numbers in some parts of the city. This is largely attributable to an increase in arrivals of international students, who have enrolled for university courses here and have settled in Aberdeen with their families. This has resulted in a rise in demand for school places in central and southern areas of the city, but has not impacted on schools within the Northfield ASG, where there continues to be excess unused capacity. So whilst there is pressure on school capacity in central and southern parts of the city, there continues to be a need to consider reducing the number of primary schools in Northfield.