

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

The feasibility study and stakeholder engagement will continue until Friday 16th 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 12th 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.

3. **Where can I get more information about the feasibility study?**

An information paper for stakeholders is available on the Council's consultation hub (scroll to the related documents section at the bottom of the screen): <https://consultation.aberdeencity.gov.uk/education-and-childrens-services/oldmachar-primary-schools-feasibility-study/>

4. **Why is there a proposal to close schools when so many new houses are being built?**

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. When taking into account the number of new houses planned within the Oldmachar area, there is still expected to be additional unused capacity within the existing schools, which means we need to look at the options for reducing the number of schools.

The new housing being constructed at Cloverhill falls within the catchment area for Scotstown School and Bridge of Don Academy, and will not impact on schools in the Oldmachar associated schools group (ASG). Separate plans are in place to ensure there will be sufficient primary school capacity within the Bridge of Don ASG to accommodate this new housing.

5. **Why is rezoning not being considered?**

Whilst some rezoning will be required if a decision is taken to close one or more schools, the excess unused space in some of the schools means that overall for the Oldmachar ASG there is more classroom capacity than is required. Whilst rezoning alone (i.e. making changes to catchment areas to help distribute pupil numbers across the existing schools) may help alleviate pressure on space in the schools which are oversubscribed, if all of the school buildings remain in place, this would not help reduce the overall excess capacity which exists across the ASG, and would not help reduce overall running costs for the buildings.

6. **Why is the school roll forecast information out of date (using 2017 data)?**

The currently published school roll forecasts were compiled in Spring/Summer 2021, and are based on the actual numbers of pupils who were enrolled at each of our schools in September 2020. For reference

purposes the forecast tables also include the actual pupil figures for each school dating back to 2017, to help indicate the changes in school rolls over time, but these figures were not used directly to predict the future pupil numbers from August 2021 onwards.

An update to the school roll forecast is expected in the coming weeks and will be made available on the Council's website as soon as possible thereafter. The current school roll forecasts can be found here: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/schools-and-education/schools-pupil-roll-forecasts>.

New questions added 29/05/23:

7. [Why is there a proposal to close schools in Oldmachar, when Forehill School is forecast to be significantly over capacity?](#)

Currently, there is a temporary arrangement in place for children living within the new Grandhome development to be eligible for a place at Forehill School, prior to the construction of new school provision which is planned for Grandhome. A new school will be required at Grandhome in the longer term to provide sufficient pupil places to serve this new community, and to ensure that children in all parts of Grandhome will have access to a school which is within a safe and reasonable walking distance from their homes. When the planned new school has opened, the forecast pupil numbers at Forehill School will reduce significantly, as Grandhome pupils will be attending the new school, and so there will still be an over-provision of school places in the Oldmachar ASG. This is why there is a need to look at the options for reducing the overall number of schools in this ASG.

8. [If a school is closed, what will happen to the building?](#)

When any Council building or asset is no longer in use, the Council follows a formal process for disposal of the asset, which includes consultation with other Council services and partners, to establish whether there are any alternative uses for the building. If no alternative uses can be found, then proposals are drawn up to consider the sale of the asset, or demolition of the building should this be deemed appropriate.

9. [If a school is closed, what will this mean for the employment of staff within that school?](#)

The redeployment and job matching process will apply for any staff within the school.

10. [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 Oldmachar 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 Oldmachar.