

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee

3 November 2021

DUAL SECONDARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA KIRKMICHAEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report 21/203)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

A scoping exercise has been undertaken at the request of Lifelong Learning Committee on the possibility of making Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area a dual catchment area for both Blairgowrie High School and Pitlochry High School.

The purpose of creating a dual catchment area for Kirkmichael Primary School would be to increase the school roll at Pitlochry High School.

1. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 On 24 August 2016, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 16/347 refers](#)) approved principles to be used as a basis for the transformation review, 'Securing the Future of the School Estate'. The principles approved by Lifelong Learning Committee as a basis for the transformation review were as follows:
 - (i) Schools should have an occupancy rate where possible greater than 60% of the capacity and ideally should be operating at over 80% capacity;
 - (ii) Every school should be rated as A or B, ie at least satisfactory for condition and suitability; and
 - (iii) Life expired buildings within the school estate should be prioritised for replacement.
- 1.2 Pitlochry High School was included in the schools to be considered due to the occupancy level and condition rating of the school. The occupancy at the time of the 2015 Census was 144 pupils. The capacity of the secondary school is 237, and therefore, this was an occupancy of 61%.
- 1.3 On 4 September 2019, Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 19/238 refers](#)) approved a number of outcomes for Pitlochry High School, including developing a detailed plan for a Highland Perthshire Learning Partnership (HPLP), which were to identify proposals to maximise the use of Pitlochry High School and undertake a scoping exercise on the possibility of making Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area a dual secondary school catchment area for both Blairgowrie High School and Pitlochry High School.
- 1.4 On 20 January 2021, a report was submitted to Lifelong Learning Committee ([Report No. 21/7 refers](#)) which provided an update on the HPLP.

- 1.5 This report details the outcomes of the scoping exercise that has been undertaken on making Kirkmichael Primary School a dual secondary school catchment area for Blairgowrie High School and Pitlochry High School.

2. SCHOOL INFORMATION

Kirkmichael Primary School

- 2.1 Kirkmichael Primary School has a capacity of 72 which is based on 3 teaching spaces. The current school roll is 54¹ with an occupancy of 75%. The school has a nursery.
- 2.2 The school is in the secondary school catchment area for Blairgowrie High School. There are currently 46² pupils attending Blairgowrie High School who are living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area.
- 2.3 Kirkmichael Primary School serves the communities of Kirkmichael, Glenshee, Bridge of Cally, Blacklunans and Straloch. The Scottish Government's Rural Schools List 2017 classifies Kirkmichael Primary School as a "remote rural" school under Section 14 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 2.4 Children living in the catchment area are split in to two distinct groups from Bridge of Cally northwards. The A924 runs to the west of the catchment area and continues over the moor to the A9 near Pitlochry. The A93 runs to the east of the catchment area. The majority of pupils attending Perth and Kinross Council schools, living in the catchment area, live in close proximity to these roads.
- 2.5 There are currently less than 5 children from the west of the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area attending Pitlochry Primary School and Pitlochry High School.

Blairgowrie High School

- 2.6 Blairgowrie High School has a current roll of 805 pupils with an occupancy of 76%. The capacity of the school is 1058 pupils. Pupils can attend the school from S1 to S6 and the catchment primary schools are:
- Alyth Primary School;
 - Burrelton Primary School;
 - Coupar Angus Primary School;
 - Glendelvine Primary School;
 - Kettins Primary School;
 - Kirkmichael Primary School;
 - Meigle Primary School;
 - Newhill Primary School; and
 - Rattray Primary School.

¹ As at 6 September 2021.

² SEEMiS at 6 September 2021.

- 2.7 Table 1 below details the projected future school roll at Blairgowrie High School.

Table 1 - Blairgowrie High School – Projected Future School Roll

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	862	878	875	841	822	802
Occupancy	81%	83%	83%	79%	78%	76%

Pitlochry High School

- 2.8 Pitlochry High School has a current roll of 117³ pupils with an occupancy of 49%. The capacity of the school is 237 pupils. Pupils can attend the school from S1 to S4. Pupils choosing to stay on for S5 and S6 attend Breadalbane Academy. The catchment primary schools for Pitlochry High School are:

- Blair Atholl Primary School;
- Logierait Primary School; and
- Pitlochry Primary School.

- 2.9 Table 2 below details the projected future school roll at Pitlochry High School.

Table 2 - Pitlochry High School – Projected Future School Roll

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	119	134	129	127	142	140
Occupancy	50%	57%	54%	54%	60%	59%

- 2.10 The occupancy of Pitlochry High School, detailed in Table 2, may increase in future years, regardless of an increase in the school roll, because of options being considered as part of HPLP to maximise the use of the school building. This could potentially reduce the overall capacity of the secondary school.

3. KIRKMICHAEL PRIMARY SCHOOL – PARENT/CARER SURVEY

- 3.1 As part of this scoping exercise, a survey has been undertaken to establish the views of parents/carers of primary school pupils currently attending Kirkmichael Primary School.

The school contacted all parents/carers and asked them to complete an online survey. The survey was available for completion between 16 September 2021 and 27 September 2021.

Due to a low response rate, the survey was further extended until 8 October 2021. Parent/carers were advised if the Council did not receive a response, it would be assumed that parents/carers are content with the current provision and wish to retain the existing secondary school catchment arrangements between Kirkmichael Primary School and Blairgowrie High School.

³ As at 6 September 2021.

The survey asked parents/carers the following questions:

1. Where would you choose to send your child/children to secondary school if you had a choice between Blairgowrie High School and Pitlochry High School and free transport was provided by the Council to both schools.
 2. Please give reasons for your choice of secondary school.
- 3.2. The survey was issued to 42 families and 19 families responded. This response represented 23 primary school pupils and 9 nursery children. Five families, representing 7 children, detailed a preference for Blairgowrie High School. 23 families, representing 37 children, did not respond to the survey and in line with the approach to be taken outlined above in para 3.1, these are recorded as a preference for Blairgowrie High School.

Table 3 - Survey Results

School	Families (Responses)	Children (Nursery/Primary)
Blairgowrie High School	28	44
Pitlochry High School	12	23
Not Sure/Undecided	2	2
Total	42	69

4. IMPACT ON OCCUPANCY

- 4.1 The survey results, detailed in section 3, have been used to assess the impact on occupancy of the introduction of a dual catchment.
- 4.2 Table 4 and Table 5 outline the difference in the school roll at Pitlochry High School and Blairgowrie High School should parents/carers choose to send their child/children to Pitlochry High School rather than Blairgowrie High School, as per the preferences noted in the survey results.

Table 4 - Pitlochry High School – Projected Future School Roll (Parent/Carer Survey Response)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	121	139	137	137	152	151
Occupancy	51%	59%	58%	58%	64%	64%
Difference (Roll)	+2	+5	+8	+10	+10	+11

Table 5 - Blairgowrie High School – Projected Future School Roll (Parent/Carer Survey Response)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	860	873	867	831	810	787
Occupancy	81%	83%	82%	79%	77%	74%
Difference (Roll)	-2	-5	-8	-10	-12 ⁴	-15

⁴ Assumption that pupils from S4 in Pitlochry will go on to Breadalbane Academy.

- 4.3 There would be a small increase in the projected school roll, of up to 11 pupils between 2023/24 and 2028/29 at Pitlochry High School and a small decrease in the projected roll of up to 15 pupils at Blairgowrie High School, if these children attended Pitlochry High School and go on to Breadalbane Academy for S5/S6.
- 4.4 In addition to the survey, some scenarios of the movements of pupils, should a dual catchment be introduced, have been developed to establish the effect on secondary school rolls, should parents make different choices in future years. These are contained in Appendix A.
- 4.5 Table 6 below, shows the projected pupil roll at Pitlochry High School if all pupils living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area were to attend Pitlochry High School.

Table 6 - Pitlochry High School – Projected Future School Roll (All pupils in Kirkmichael Primary School catchment attend the school)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	126	156	156	162	178	163
Occupancy	53%	66%	66%	68%	75%	69%
Difference (Roll)	+7	+22	+27	+35	+36	+23

- 4.6 Table 7 below, shows the projected pupil roll at Blairgowrie High School if all pupils living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area were to attend Pitlochry High School. There would be a decrease in the projected roll for Blairgowrie High School. This would lead to an incremental staffing reduction at Blairgowrie High School over time.

Table 7 - Blairgowrie High School – Projected Future School Roll (All pupils in Kirkmichael Primary School catchment attend Pitlochry High School)

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
School Roll	855	856	848	805	780	763
Occupancy	81%	81%	80%	76%	74%	72%
Difference (Roll)	-7	-22	-27	-36 ⁵	-42	-39

- 4.7 In summary, based on the results of the survey, there would be a limited positive impact on the school roll/occupancy at Pitlochry High School if a dual catchment was established. However, it is possible in future years that more pupils could choose to attend Pitlochry High School if there was a dual catchment. While this may increase the occupancy and roll of Pitlochry High School, this would have a negative impact on the roll/occupancy at Blairgowrie High School and could lead to an incremental staffing reduction at the school, which would be detrimental to Blairgowrie High School and its pupils. This would be contrary to the principle that any change to the catchment should not lead to the detriment of another school.

⁵ Assumption that pupils from S4 in Pitlochry will go on to Breadalbane Academy.

5. PUPIL IMPACT

5.1 Transition to Secondary School

Secondary school transition arrangements for Kirkmichael Primary School pupils commence during Primary 6 and run to the end of Primary 7.

A full transition programme, including visits to the secondary school and participation in both curricular and extra-curricular activities at the school, is a feature throughout the last two years of primary. In addition, secondary staff, usually Guidance Teachers and Pupil Support staff as well as Community Link Workers, visit primary schools to work with young people and prepare them for their transition to secondary school.

There is also an enhanced transition programme for those young people who may require additional support in moving from primary to secondary.

5.2 Transition to S5/S6

Pupils from the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area, choosing to attend Pitlochry High School for secondary education, under a dual catchment arrangement, would go on to attend Breadalbane Academy or Blairgowrie High School for S5 and S6.

5.3 Travel Distance/Journey Times

Secondary School pupils are transported to school by the Council if they live more than 3 miles from their catchment school, or on the grounds of safety.

There are currently 44 pupils transported from the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area to Blairgowrie High School. Pupils are transported using 5 vehicles which includes buses, taxis and private hire vehicles.

Currently, the longest journey time for a pupil living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area travelling to Blairgowrie High School, is approximately 1 hour.

Estimated journey times for pupils attending Blairgowrie High School, Pitlochry High School and Breadalbane Academy from areas throughout the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area are detailed below. Pupils for Breadalbane Academy would change transport in Pitlochry and travel to school on existing bus contracts. This would necessitate S5/S6 pupils arriving in Pitlochry prior to the bus services leaving for Aberfeldy at 7.55am or 8.06am. Table 8 below, outlines estimated journey times.

Table 8 - Travel Times to Secondary Schools

Location	Blairgowrie High School	Pitlochry High School⁶	Breadalbane Academy (from location)⁷
PH10 7PD (Enochdhu Area)	Current 55 minutes	Estimated 30 minutes	Estimated 69 mins or 76 mins
PH10 7NS (Kirkmichael Area)	Current 50 minutes	Estimated 35 minutes	Estimated 74 mins or 81 mins
PH10 7NH (Ballintuim Area)	Current 35 minutes	Estimated 50 minutes	Estimated 89 mins or 96 mins
PH10 7JQ (Bridge of Cally Area)	Current 25 minutes	Estimated 60 minutes	Estimated 99 mins or 106 mins
PH10 6TE (Blairgowrie Area)	Current 15 minutes	Estimated 70 minutes	Estimated 109 mins or 116 mins

46% of children currently attending Kirkmichael Primary School or nursery would benefit from shorter journey times if they were to attend Pitlochry High School rather than Blairgowrie High School. Most of the children who would benefit live in the Kirkmichael and Enochdhu areas. The journey time to Breadalbane Academy for all S5/S6 pupils in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area would be longer than if they attended Blairgowrie High School.

5.4 Transport/Travel Route

An additional consideration to this proposal is the route children would take from Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area to Pitlochry High School and on to Breadalbane Academy for S5 and S6.

During periods of heavy snowfall, the A924 is treated in sections to ensure there are safe routes to school for primary school children attending Kirkmichael Primary School and the secondary school at Blairgowrie High School.

The A924 between Kirkmichael and Pitlochry, over the Moulin Moor, is almost 400m above sea level and can be affected by inclement weather when other parts of the route are not. In heavy snow conditions, a snow cutter is required before lorry mounted snow ploughs can be used. This section of the road is closed on approximately 2 occasions per year, but it can be more, dependent on the severity of conditions. Analysis of winter logs for 2019/20 and 2020/21, indicate 21 days in total over the two years where the route was not passable before 9am in the morning and 6 days where the route was not passable in the afternoon. 20 of those 27 days were school days and school transport would not have been able to proceed to, or return from, Pitlochry until roads were treated.

⁶ Journey times are generous and based on similar journey times between pick up points for an existing service operating to Blairgowrie High School. Journey times may be reduced depending on number of pick-ups required and if smaller vehicle used.

⁷ Journey times from Kirkmichael catchment to Pitlochry may be reduced depending on number of pick-ups required and if smaller vehicle used.

It cannot be assumed that school transport can operate beyond contract times, due to other commitments, therefore pupils may not be able to attend school on the dates where the road is late opening unless transported to and from school by parents/carers.

The A924 between Bridge of Cally and Pitlochry is included on the Council's Priority Gritting List during periods of inclement weather. The road is not included on the principal road network, which means, although the road will be treated when required if there is widespread inclement weather, the road may not be cleared on the first day of snowfall, or on consecutive days, depending on the severity of the weather and clearance for other Priority 1 roads on the principal road network.

If a dual secondary school catchment was created for Kirkmichael Primary School with Pitlochry High School, the A924 between Kirkmichael and Pitlochry would have to be added to the principal road network so that the route could be used by school transport during severe winter conditions. It should be noted that the upgrading of the route will not ensure that school transport will run under all circumstances.

5.5 Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities are offered at Blairgowrie High School, Pitlochry High School and Breadalbane Academy. Parents/Carers are responsible for all transport arrangements should their child(ren) attend an extra-curricular activity within a school and transport home outwith the normal school finish time. Free home to school transport does not operate outwith school start and finish times.

There is currently a public transport service (Service 71) which operates from Blairgowrie to Kirkmichael/Enochdhu and Spittal of Glenshee via Bridge of Cally which pupils may use to travel home after attending extra-curricular activities, should they require it. Although there is a bus service between Aberfeldy and Pitlochry, there is currently no local bus provision from Pitlochry to the Kirkmichael area.

6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT

- 6.1 Primary schools with dual catchments have to operate in such a way that links are maintained with both secondary schools. Secondary schools with dual catchments also have to maintain links to the primary schools. This is not an effective use of resources if pupils attend only one of the secondary schools.
- 6.2 The estimated cost of adding the A924 between Kirkmichael and Pitlochry to the principal road network would be approximately £200,000 per annum. This cost is based on the provision of additional machinery, labour and road treatments.
- 6.3 The current cost of transporting pupils from the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area to Blairgowrie High School is approximately £136,000 per annum.

The number of children travelling, and the transport required, would change year on year depending on pupil numbers and which secondary school the pupils choose to attend.

If pupil numbers were split between Pitlochry High School and Blairgowrie High School, it is assumed that a similar number of vehicles would be required to serve each site, albeit certain vehicles may have reduced passenger capacities. One service currently acts as the local public transport option for the Tarvie/Kirkmichael/Bridge of Cally communities to/from Blairgowrie, so this would likely remain as a school transport option to Blairgowrie High School.

It should be noted that additional transport would have to be provided to cater for the earlier journeys required to serve Breadalbane Academy for S5/S6 pupils. Pupil demand will determine the number and size of vehicles required. Approximate costs of additional transport would be £20,000 per annum (8 seat taxi/private hire vehicle) and £38,000 per annum (16-seater bus).

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The scoping exercise has considered whether a dual catchment was feasible and the extent to which this would increase the roll at Pitlochry High School. A survey was undertaken to establish the views of parents/carers of primary school pupils currently attending Kirkmichael Primary School. This provided an understanding of the potential impact of occupancy at Pitlochry High School and the related consequences for pupils, including travel distances and journey times. The implications for transport and travel routes, together with the related effect on finance and resources, has also been considered.

7.2 The impact of creating a dual secondary school catchment area for Kirkmichael Primary School is as follows:

- Parents/carers and pupils would have a choice of two secondary schools and free school transport would be provided to both schools;
- Based on the survey results, the roll of Pitlochry High School would increase by a maximum of 11 pupils over the next 6 years if a dual catchment was put in place;
- There would be a small decrease in the roll at Blairgowrie High School which would, over time, lead to an incremental reduction in staffing at Blairgowrie High School;
- There would be an additional cost of approximately £200,000 per annum for winter road maintenance for school transport to Pitlochry from the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area;
- Travel time to Breadalbane Academy for S5/S6 will be longer for all pupils living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area;
- Public transport provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities in Blairgowrie for young people living in the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area;
- There may be additional transport costs depending on how many children access both secondary schools; and

- There will be additional school staff time required to resource transition arrangements for two secondary schools.

7.3 In conclusion, based on the survey responses, establishing a dual catchment for Kirkmichael Primary School is unlikely to significantly increase the school roll at Pitlochry High School at this time. This work has also shown that there is potential for detriment to Blairgowrie High School through an incremental reduction in staffing, should large numbers of pupils from Kirkmichael Primary School elect to attend Pitlochry High School as result of dual catchment arrangements. There are also substantial additional costs and resources to establish and maintain new school transport routes associated with pupil travel to Pitlochry from the Kirkmichael Primary School catchment area.

7.4 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Notes that the pupil roll at Pitlochry High School is projected to increase without the introduction of a dual catchment;
- (ii) Notes the outcome of the survey undertaken with parents/carers of pupils currently attending Kirkmichael Primary School;
- (iii) Notes that establishing a dual catchment area for Pitlochry High School and Blairgowrie High School for Kirkmichael Primary School, would not achieve the objective of increasing the school roll at Pitlochry High School significantly over the next 6 years, based on the survey results;
- (iv) Notes that there is the possibility of detriment to Blairgowrie High School, if there is a reduction in pupil numbers, due to an incremental reduction in staffing;
- (v) Notes the challenges and additional costs associated with travel to Pitlochry High School and Breadalbane Academy; and
- (vi) Approves the retention of the existing secondary catchment arrangements between Kirkmichael Primary School and Blairgowrie High School.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes/None
Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these objectives.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to all of these objectives.

- 1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority area:

- Learning and Achievement

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no financial implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications other than those noted in the main body of the report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section reflects that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

- 3.2.1 However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

Sustainability

- 3.3 N/A

Legal and Governance

3.4 N/A

3.5 N/A

Risk

3.6 N/A

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Head of Finance, the Head of Legal and Governance and the Head of Property Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

4.2 The report details the consultation which has been carried out in the development of this report.

5. Communication

5.1 A communication plan was prepared which supported effective communication and engagement with stakeholders.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Appendix A – Dual Secondary School Catchment Area – Kirkmichael Primary School